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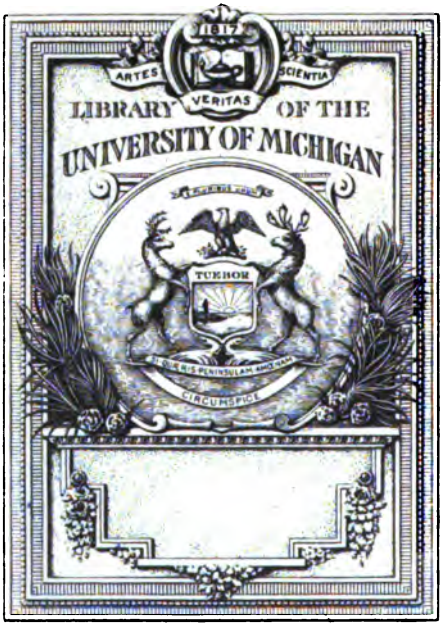
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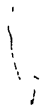

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STEWART & KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

ON THE SEABOARD

A NOVEL OF THE BALTIC ISLANDS

FROM THE SWEDISH OF

AUGUST STRINDBERG

AUTHOR OF

"EASTER," "LUCKY PEHR," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

ELIZABETH CLARKE WESTERGREN

AUTHORIZED EDITION

CINCINNATI

STEWART & KIDD COMPANY

1913

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PREFACE

August Strindberg's first literary productions were warmly received, and would have aroused lasting enthusiasm and admiration had the young author's prolific pen been less aggressive, in this, for his country, a totally new style of novel. His intrepid sarcasm which emanated from a physical disability, known only to a few of his most intimate friends, called forth severe criticism from the old aristocrats and the conservative element, which drove the gifted dramatist from his own country to new spheres. Life's vicissitudes at Vierwaldstätter See, and Berlin, also later on at Paris from whence his fame spread rapidly over Europe, changed his realism to pessimism.

After years of ceaseless work, during which he dipped into almost every branch of science, he suddenly determined to transfer his activities to this side of the Atlantic, where he was desirous of becoming known. For this purpose his most singular novel was chosen for translation; meantime some invisible power drew him back to his birthplace, Stockholm, and a new generation cheered his coming.

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Later on critics called him "A demolisher and a reformer that came like a cyclone, with his daring thought and daring words, which broke in upon the everlasting tenets and raised Swedish culture."

His delineations are photographical exactness without retouch, bearing always a strong reflection of his personality.

MAGNUS WESTERGREN.

Boston, Mass.
April, 1913.

ON THE SEABOARD

CHAPTER FIRST

A FISHING boat lay one May evening to beam-wind, out on Goosestone bay. "Rokarna," known to all on the coast by their three pyramids, were changing to blue, while upon the clear sky clouds were forming just as the sun began to sink. Already there was dashing outside the points, and a disagreeable flapping in the mainsail signified that the land-breeze would soon break against newborn currents of air, from above, from the sea and from aft.

At the tiller sat the Custom House Surveyor of the East Skerries, a giant with black long full beard. Occasionally he exchanged a look with two subordinates who were sitting in the bow, one of whom was tending the clutch-pole, keeping the big square sail to the wind.

Sometimes the steersman cast a searching look at the little gentleman who was crouching at the mast seemingly afraid and frozen, now and then drawing his shawl closer round his body.

The surveyor must have found him ridiculous, for frequently he turned leeward with a pretense of spitting tobacco juice to conceal a rising laugh.

The little gentleman was dressed in a beaver-colored spring coat under which a pair of wide moss-green pants peeped out, flaring at the bottom round a pair of crocodile shagreen shoes topped with brown cloth and black buttons. Nothing of his under dress was visible, but round his neck was twisted a cream-colored foulard, while his hands were well protected in a pair of salmon-colored three-button glacé-gloves, and the right wrist was encircled by a gold bracelet carved in the form of a serpent biting its tail. Ridges upon the gloves showed that rings were worn beneath. The face, as much as could be seen, was thin and haggard; a small black mustache with ends curled upwards increased the paleness and gave it a foreign expression. The hat was turned back, exposing a black closely cut bang resembling a calotte.

What seemed most to attract the indefatigable attention of the steersman was the bracelet, mustache and bang.

During the long voyage from Dalaro this man, who was a great humorist, had tried to get up a cheery conversation with the Fish Commissioner, whom he had in charge to take to the station at the East Skerries, but the young doctor had shown

an injured unsusceptibility to his witty importunities which convinced the surveyor that the "instructor" was insolent.

Meanwhile the wind freshened as they passed Hanstone to windward and the dangerous sail began to flutter. The fish commissioner, who had been sitting with a navy chart in his hand, noting the answers to his questions, placed it in his pocket and turned toward the man at the tiller saying in a voice more like a woman's than a man's:

"Please sail more carefully!"

"Is the instructor afraid?" asked the helmsman scornfully.

"Yes, I am careful of my life and keep close hold of it," answered the commissioner.

"But not of other's lives?" asked the helmsman.

"At least not so much as my own," returned the commissioner, "and sailing is a dangerous occupation, especially with a square sail."

"So, sir, you have often sailed before with a square sail?"

"Never in my life, but I can see where the wind directs its power and can reckon how much resistance the weight of the boat can make and well judge when the sail will jibe."

"Well, take the tiller yourself then!" snubbingly remarked the surveyor.

"No! that is your place! I do not ride on the

coachman's box when I travel on the Crown's errands."

"Oh, you cannot manage a boat, of course."

"If I could not, it is certainly easy to learn, since every other schoolboy can do it and every custom house subordinate, therefore I need not be ashamed that I cannot, only sail carefully now as I would not willingly have my gloves spoiled and get wet."

It was an order, and the surveyor, who was cock of the walk at the East Skerries, felt himself degraded. After a movement on the tiller the sail filled and the boat sped onward steadily towards the rock, with its white custom house cottage brightly shining in the rays of the setting sun.

The seaboard was vanishing, there was a feeling that all kindly protection was left behind, when venturing out on the open boundless water with darkness threatening toward the east. There was no prospect of crawling to leeward of islands or rocks, no possibility in case of storm to lay up to and reef, out right into the middle of destruction, over the black gulf, out to that little rock that looks no larger than a buoy cast into the middle of the sea. The fish commissioner, as signified before, held fast to his only life and was intelligent enough to count his insignificant resistance against nature's superiority. Now he felt

depressed. He was too clear-sighted with his thirty-six years to overestimate the insight and daring of the man at the tiller. He did not look with reliance at his brown and whiskered visage, nor would he believe that a muscular arm was equal to a wind which blew with thousands of pounds pressure against a rocking sail. He viewed such courage as founded upon faulty judgment. What stupidity, thought he, to risk one's life in a little open boat when there exist deckers and steamers. What incredible folly to hoist such a big sail on a spruce mast, which bends like a bow when a strong wind strikes it. The lee-shroud was hanging slack, likewise the forestay, and the whole wind pressure was lying on the windward-shroud, which seemed rotten. Trust to such an uncertain residue as a few flax ropes more or less cohesive, he would not, and therefore he turned with the next gust of wind to the subordinate who was sitting close to the halyard, and in a short penetrating voice commanded, "Let the sail run!"

The two inferiors looked toward the stern, awaiting the helmsman's orders, but the fish commissioner repeated his command instantly and with such emphasis that the sail sank.

The surveyor in the stern shrieked.

"Who the Devil commands the maneuvering of my boat?"

"I," answered the commissioner.

Whereupon he turned to the subordinates with the order.

"Put out the oars!"

The oars were put out and the boat gave a few rolls, for the surveyor had left the tiller angrily at the command, exclaiming,

"Yes, then he can take the helm himself!"

The commissioner at once took his place in the stern and the tiller was under his arm before the surveyor had ceased swearing.

The glacé-glove cracked instantly at the thumb, but the boat made even speed while the surveyor sat with laughter in his whiskers, and one oar ready to push out to give course to the boat. The commissioner had no attention to bestow upon the doubting seaman, but stared attentively windward and could soon discern a heaving sea with its swell many meters long, from the surge with its short water fall, then after a hasty glance astern he measured the leeway, and in the wake noted the setting of the currents, it was perfectly clear what course must be held not to drift past the East Skerries.

The surveyor, who had searched long to meet the black burning glances that they might mark his laughter, became tired, for it looked as though they would have no contact with anything that could soil or disturb them. After a moment's be-

seeching the surveyor becoming absent and dejected began to observe the maneuvering.

The sun had reached the horizon, the waves were breaking purple black at the base, deep green at the side, and where the crests rose highest they lighted up grass green. The foam sprouted and hissed red champagne colored in the sun. The boat and men were now low down in the dusk, or the next moment, on the crest of a wave, the four faces glowed and instantly faded away.

Not every wave broke so high, some were only rocking slowly and cradling the boat, lifting and sucking it forward. It seemed as though the little man at the tiller could from a distance judge when a gigantic wave would come, and with a slight push at the tiller held firm or sneaked between the dreadful green walls, which threatened to spring and form an arch over the boat.

The fact was that the danger had really increased through the sail being furled, for the driving power had diminished and the sail's lifting ability must be dispensed with, therefore the surveyor's astonishment at the incredible fine maneuvering began to change to admiration.

He looked at the changing expression on the pale face and the movement in the black eyes, and felt that inside there was a combined calculation.

Then not to seem superfluous himself he put out his oar, for he felt the time had come, and acknowledged willingly the superiority before it was wrung from him, thus:

"Oh, he has been at sea before!"

The fish commissioner, who was deeply occupied, and would have no intercourse whatever, as he was afraid of being surprised and deceived in a moment's weakness by the apparent external superiority of the giant, made no response.

His right glove had cracked round the thumb, and the bracelet had fallen over the hand. When the flame faded from the crest of the waves and the day closed, he took out with his left hand a lorgnette and placed it in his right eye, moving his head quickly to several points of the compass as though he would sight land, where no land was to be seen, and then threw this brief question forward.

"Have you no lighthouse on the East Skerries?"

"God knows we have not," answered the surveyor.

"Have we any shoals?"

"Deep water."

"Shall we sight Landsort or Sandham's lighthouse?"

"Not much of Sandham but more to Landsort," replied the surveyor.

"Sit still at your places and we shall come out all right," finished the commissioner, who seemed to have taken a bearing by the heads of the three men and some unknown firm point in the distance.

The clouds had flocked together and the May dusk had given place to obscurity. It was like a swing forwards into some thin impenetrable material, without light. The sea was rising only as darker shadows against the shadowy sky, the heads of the waves struck the bottom of the boat and lifting it up on their backs dived down on the other side and rolled out. But now to separate friend from foe was difficult and the calculation more uncertain. Two oars were out to leeward and one to windward, which if applied with more or less power at the right moment would keep the boat buoyant.

The commissioner, who soon could not see more than the two lighthouses in north and south, must now compensate the loss of sight by the ear and before he could become used to the sea's roaring, sighing, hissing and spouting, or distinguish between a dashing or a surging wave, the water had already come into the boat, so that to save his fine shoes he placed his feet on a thwart.

Soon he had studied the harmony of the waves, and could even hear from the regular beating of the swell the danger approaching, and feel on the right ear-drum when the wind pressed the harder

and threatened to toss the water higher. It was as though he had improvised nautical and meteorological instruments out of his susceptible senses from which the conductors connected with his big brain battery, hidden by that little ridiculous hat and the black bang.

The men who at the moment of the water's intrusion muttered rebellious words, became silenced when they felt how the boat shot forward, and at each word of command, windward, or leeward, they knew which way to pull.

The commissioner had taken his bearings on the two lighthouses and used the lorgnette quadrangle glass as a distance measure, but the difficulty of holding the course was that no light could be seen from the windows of the cottages since they were in the lee of the hillock. When the dangerous voyage had been continued an hour or more, a dark rise was observed forward against the horizon. The helmsman, who would not, to gain doubtful advice, disturb his own intuitions on which he relied most, bore down on what he supposed to be the East Skerries or some of their points, consoling himself that arriving at a firm object, whatever it might be, was always better than hovering between air and water. The dark wall approached with a speed greater than that of the boat so that suspicion dawned in the commissioner's mind that everything was not right in

their course. In order to ascertain what it could be and at the same time give a signal in case the obscure object should be a vessel which had neglected to put its lights out, he took up his box of storm matches and lighting them all, held them up in the air a moment, then threw them up so that they illuminated a few meters around the boat. The light penetrated the darkness for only a second, but the picture which appeared like a magic-lantern view was fixed before his eyes for several seconds, and he saw drifting ice heaved upon a rock, against which a wave broke like a cave over a gigantic rock of limespar, and a flock of long-tailed ducks and sea-gulls that arose with numerous shrieks and were drowned in the darkness. The sight of the breaking wave affected the commissioner as it does the condemned to look upon the coffin in which his decapitated body shall rest, and he felt in a moment of imagination the double pang of cold and smothering, but the agony which paralyzed his muscles awoke on the other hand all the concealed powers of the soul, so that he, in a fraction of a second, could make a sure estimate of how great the danger was, and count out the only way of escape, whereupon he cried out, "Hold all!"

The men who had been sitting with their backs toward the wave and had not observed it, rested on their oars, and the boat was sucked into the

wave which might have been three or four meters high. It broke over the boat, forming a green cupola and fell on the other side with all its mass of water. The boat was disgorged half filled with water and the occupants half smothered from the dreadful compression of air. Three outcries as from sleepers who have the nightmare were heard at a time, but the fourth, the man at the tiller, was silent. He made only a gesture with his hand toward the rock where now a light was shimmering, only a few cable lengths to leeward, and then sank in the stern sheets and lay there.

The boat ceased pitching for it had come into smooth water, the oarsmen were all sitting as if intoxicated, dipping the oars, which were now unnecessary for the boat was slowly wafted into harbor by the fair wind.

"What have you in the boat, good folks?" greeted an old fisherman after he had said "Good evening," which the wind swept away.

"It should be a fish instructor!" whispered the surveyor as he pulled the boat upon the beach.

"So it is such a one who comes to spy out the nets! Well, he shall be treated as he seeks to be," said fisherman Oman, who seemed to be head man for the few poor population of the island.

The custom house surveyor waited for the instructor to go on shore, but he saw no sign of

movement in that little bundle which lay in the stern so he climbed uneasily into the boat and clasped both arms round the prostrate body and carried it to the beach.

"Is he gone?" asked Oman, not without a certain tremor of hope.

"There isn't much of him left," answered the surveyor as he carried his wet load up to the cottage.

The sight reminded of a giant and a lilliputian when the imposing surveyor entered his brother's kitchen where his sister-in-law stood at the fire, and as he laid down the little body on the sofa an expression of compassion for the weaker man gleamed from the low-browed, dark-whiskered visage.

"Here we have the fish inspector, Mary," he greeted his sister-in-law, placing his arm round her waist. "Help us now to get something dry upon him and something wet into him and then let him go to his room."

The commissioner made a wretched and ridiculous figure as he lay on the hard wooden sofa. The white standing collar twisted around his neck like a dirty rag, all of the fingers of the right hand peeped out of the cracked glove over which the softened cuffs hung sticking with the dissolved starch. The small crocodile shoes had lost all shine and shape, and it was with the greatest

effort that the surveyor and his sister-in-law could pull them off the feet.

When he was finally deprived of most of his clothing and covered with quilts, they carried him boiled milk and schnapps, each shaking an arm, after which the surveyor raised the little body and slowly poured the milk into it. Beneath the closed eyes the mouth gaped, but when the sister-in-law would give him a dram, the smell seemed to act like a quick poison; with a gesture of the hand he pushed the glass back, and opening his eyes wide awake as though just finishing a refreshing sleep, he asked for his room.

Of course it was not in order but it would be in about an hour if he would only lie still and wait.

The commissioner was lying there spending an intolerable hour with his eyes flitting over the tiresome arrangements of the chamber and its occupants. It was the government's cottage for the surveyor of that little department of the custom house on the East Skerries. Everything was scanty, merely a roof over the head. The white, bare walls were as narrow as the Crown's ideas, four white rectangles which enclosed a room covered by a white rectangle. Strange, hard as a hotel room, which is not to dwell in, only for lodging. To put on wall papers for his successor or for the Crown, neither the surveyor nor his predecessors had the heart. In the midst of this

dead whiteness stood dark, poor, factory-made furniture, with half modern shapes. A round dining table of knotted pine stained with walnut and marked with white rings from dishes, chairs of the same material with high backs, and tilting on three legs, a bed-sofa, manufactured like ready-made men's clothing, from the cheapest and least possible material. Nothing seemed to fulfill its purpose of inviting rest and comfort, everything was useless, and therefore unsightly, notwithstanding its ornaments of papier maché.

The surveyor placed his broad buttock on a rattan chair and rested his mighty back against it, the maneuver was followed by annoying creaks and a morose exhortation from the sister-in-law, to be careful of other folk's things, whereupon the surveyor answered with an impudent patting followed by a look which left no doubt as to the relations existing between them.

The oppression which the whole room had caused in the commissioner was increased by the discovery of this discord. As naturalist he had not the current ideas about what was permissible and what was not permissible, but he had a strongly impressed instinct of the designs in certain arrangements of nature's laws and suffered internally when he saw nature's commands violated. This was to him as though he should have found in his laboratory an acid which since the

world's creation had only united with one base but was now, against its nature, forming a union with two.

His imagination was stirred in remonstrance over evolution from common sensuality to monogamy, and he felt himself back in the dark ages among wild herds of human beings, who lived a coral life and existed in masses, before selection and variation were attained to ordain individual personal being and consanguinity.

When he saw a two-years-old girl with too big a head and fish eyes walking around the chamber with timid footsteps, as though afraid to be seen, he comprehended at once that a doubtful birth had sown its seeds of discord which were working dissolution and disturbance, and he could easily understand that the moment must come when this living testimony would pay all the penalties of being an involuntary witness.

In the midst of these thoughts the door opened and the husband entered.

It was the surveyor's brother who had thus far remained a subordinate. He was physically even better endowed than the surveyor, but he was a blond with an open and friendly look.

After a cheerful "Good evening," he sat down at the table beside his brother and, taking the child on his lap, kissed it.

"We have a visitor," said the surveyor, point-

ing to the sofa where the commissioner lay. "It is the fish instructor, who will live upstairs."

"So, it is he?" said Vestman, as he rose to greet him.

With the child on his arm he approached the sofa, because he was host of the cottage, while his brother was unmarried and only boarded with him. Therefore he found it his place to welcome the guest.

"We have it simply out here," added he after a few words of welcome, "but my wife isn't entirely at a loss in preparing food, since she has served in better houses before, and married me three years ago, yet since we got this brat here she has a little more to think of. Yes, anybody can get children if they help each other,— as a matter of course I am not in need of help, as they say."

The commissioner was surprised at the sudden turn the long sentence had taken, and asked himself if the man was cognizant of anything, or if he had only a feeling that there was something out of order. He himself had seen in ten minutes the way things stood.

How then was it possible that he who was interested in the question had seen nothing in a couple of years?

He was overcome with loathing at the whole thing, and turned to the wall to blind his eyes, and

with mental pictures of a pleasant nature let the remaining half hour pass.

He could not make himself deaf, and heard against his will the talk, which a short time before had been lively, becoming broken as though the words were measured with a rule before spoken, and when there was a silence the husband filled it out as though from aversion, and fearing to hear something he would not hear, and could not be calm before his own stream of words intoxicated him.

When the hour was finally to an end and no order concerning the room had been given, the commissioner rising asked if it was ready.

O yes, it was ready in a way, but —

Here the commissioner asked in a tone of command to be shown to his room at once, reminding them in fitting words that he had not come to share a room with them, or for hospitality, he was traveling on the Crown's errands and only asked for his rights — and those he would have because of a memorial from the Civil Department through the Internal Revenue Office, which had been sent to the Royal Custom House in Dalaro.

This straightened affairs at once, and Vestman, with a candle in his fist, followed the severe gentleman upstairs to the gable chamber, where nothing in the arrangements could explain the requested hour's delay.

It was an ordinary, large room with walls as white as those downstairs, the big window opened on the longest wall as a black hole through which streamed the darkness unimpeded by any curtains.

A bed stood there ready for use, simple, only an elevation of the floor to prevent drafts, a table, two chairs and a washstand comprised the furniture. The commissioner threw a look of despair about him, when he, who was used to feast his eyes to satisfaction on luxuries, saw only these scattered articles placed about in space, where the candle battled with the darkness and where the big window seemed to consume every beam of light which was produced by the burning tallow.

He felt lost, as though after battling upwards for half his maturity to attain refinement, good position and luxuries, he had fallen to poverty, moved down to a lower class. It was as though his love of beauty and wisdom were imprisoned, deprived of their nourishment and subject to banishment. Those naked walls were a middle age cloister cell where asceticism in image, and emptiness in the middle hurried the famined fantasy to gnaw itself and bring forth lighter or darker fancies only to become extricated from nothing. The white, the shapeless, the colorless nothing in the whitewashed walls raised an activity of the imagination such as a savage's cave or a green bough hut never could have evoked, or

the forest with its ever changing colors and moving outlines would have dispensed. An activity that not the field, nor the heath with the clouds' and sky's rich coloring, nor yet the never tiring sea, could call forth.

He felt at once a rising desire instantly to paint the walls full of sunny landscapes with palms and parrots, to stretch a Persian rug over the ceiling and throw hides of deer upon the plank floor covering the ruled-ledger appearance, to place sofas in the corners with small tables in front, to suspend a hanging lamp over a round table strewn with books and magazines, stand a piano against the short wall and dress the long wall with book shelves, and away in the corner of the sofa set a little woman's figure, no matter which one! — Just as the candle on the table fought against the darkness, so his fantasy rebelled against the room's arrangements, and thus it lost its hold, everything disappeared, and the dreadful surroundings frightened him to bed. Quenching the light he drew the blankets over his head.

The wind shook the whole gable, and the water caraff rattled against the drinking glasses. The draft passed through the room from window to door and sometimes touched his locks of hair, which were dried from the sea wind, so that he fancied someone stroked them with his hand, while between the gusts of wind, like the striking

of the kettledrum in an orchestra, beat and boomed the big breakers against the caverned rocks out on the south point. And when he had finally become used to the monotonous sound of wind and wave, he heard, shortly before he fell asleep, a man's voice in the room below teaching a child its evening prayer.

CHAPTER SECOND

WHEN the commissioner, after a dead sleep induced by the efforts of the preceding day and the strong sea air, awoke the next morning and looked out of the blankets, he observed first an incomprehensible silence, and found that his ear caught slight sounds that otherwise he would have paid no attention to. He could hear each little movement of the sheet as it rose and fell from his respiration, the friction of his locks of hair against the pillow-case, the pulsations in the neck arteries, the rickety bed repeating the heart beat on a small scale. He felt the silence because the wind had gone down, and only the swell beat against the compressed air in the hollows of the strand and returned once every half minute. From the bed which was placed opposite the window he saw, through the lower pane, something like a blue draw-curtain, bluer than the air, and it kept moving toward him slowly, as though it would come in through the window and overflow the room. He knew it was the sea, but it looked so small,— and it rose like a perpendicular wall instead of expanding as a horizontal surface, be-

cause the long breakers were fully lighted by the sun and cast no shadows from which the eye could form a perspective image.

He arose, and partly dressing himself opened the window. The raw, moist air in the chamber rushed out, and from the sea came a warm greenhouse air, warmed several hours by the radiant May sun. Below the window he saw only low, jagged rocks in the crevices of which lay small dusty drifts of snow, and near by bloomed small white rye-flowers, well protected in beds of moss, and the poor wild pansies, pale yellow as from famine, and blue as from chill, hoisting their poor country's poor colors to the first spring sun. Lower down crept the heath and the crowberry vine, looking down over the precipice, below which lay a windrow of white sand, pulverized by the sea, and in which were stuck scattered sand-oat stalks; then came the kelp belt as a dark sash or braid on the white sand, highest up it was almost ivory black from last year's kelp in which were sticking shells, leaves of fir, twigs, fish bones, and toward the sea it was olive-brown from the last fresh kelp, which with its curled and knotted fronds formed a garniture like a chenille cord. Inside on the sandy side walk lay the top of a barkless pine, sand scrubbed, washed by the water, polished by the wind, bleached by the sun, resembling the ribs of a mammoth skeleton, and

around it a whole osteologist's museum of like skeletons or fragments of the same.

A beacon, which had shown ships the way for years, lay thrown up, and with its thick end looked like the thigh bone and condyle of a giraffe; in another place a juniper shrub, like the carcass of a drowned cat, with its white small roots stretching out for the tail.

Outside the strand lay reefs and rocks which one moment glanced wet in the sunshine, the next were submerged by the swell which passed over them with a splash, or if it had not sufficient power, rose, burst, and threw a water-fall of foam into the air.

Outside the island lay the shining sea, that great flat, as the fishermen called it, and now in the morning hour it stretched like a blue canvas without a wrinkle but undulating like a flag. The big round surface would have been tiresome had not a red buoy been anchored outside the reef, and brightened up the monotony of the surface with its minium spot like the seal on a letter.

This was the sea, certainly nothing new to Commissioner Borg who had seen several corners of the world. Still it was the desolate sea seen as it were in a *tête-à-tête*. It did not terrify like the forest with its gloomy hiding places, it was quieting like an open, big, faithful blue eye. Everything could be seen at once, no ambush, no

lurking place. It flattered the spectator when he saw this circle round him, where he himself ever remained the center. The big water surface was as a corporeity radiating from the beholder existing only in and with the beholder. As long as he stood on shore, he felt himself intimate with the now harmless power and superior to its enormous might, for he was beyond its reach. When he reminded himself of the dangers he had undergone the evening before, the agony and wrath he had endured in his combat against this brutal enemy, which he had succeeded in eluding, he smiled in magnanimity toward the vanquished and beaten foe, which was after all only a blind tool at the wind's service, and was now stretching itself out to resume its rest in the sunlight.

This was East Skerries, the classical, for they have their old history, have lived long, flourished, and declined, the old East Skerries that in the Middle Ages were a great fishing port where that important article stromling was caught, and for which a special law of guild was given and is still maintained up to to-day. The stromling serve the same purpose in middle Sweden and Norrland as the herring does on the west coast and in Norway, being only a kind of herring, a product of the Baltic Sea, and suited to its small resources. It was sought during the time when herring were scarce and dear, and less sought after when they

were plentiful. It has been for ages the winter food for middle Sweden, and was eaten so continually that a song is still preserved from the days of Queen Christina's enticing Frenchmen into the country, who complained of the eternal hard bread and infinite stromling. A man's age ago the great land-owners paid their laborers' wages in natural products which consisted mostly of herring; after herring-fishing declined they substituted salt stromling. The price rose and the fishing which previously had been managed moderately and for domestic use, now became an eager speculation. The shoals of the East Skerries which are the richest on the coast of Sodermanland, began to be used on a large scale, the fish were disturbed during spawning time, the meshes of the nets were made closer and closer, and as a natural consequence the fish diminished, not so much from extermination perhaps as from the fact that they left their former spawning places and sought the depths where as yet no fisherman has had the resolution to search for the flown prey.

The learned puzzled long with investigations over the cause of the diminution of the stromling supply, but the Academy of Agriculture took the initiative, by appointing skillful fish commissioners, both to learn the cause and find a remedy.

This was now Commissioner Borg's mission at

the East Skerries for the summer. The place was not lively as the Skerries are not situated on one of the main courses to Stockholm. The big vessels from the south usually pass by Landsort, Dalaro and Vaxholm, those from the east, and during certain winds, even those from the south, seek passage by Sandham and Vaxholm, while the merchants' vessels from Norrland and Finland pass between Furusund and Vaxholm.

The eastern route is mostly used in case of necessity by the Esthonians, who as a rule come from south-east, and by others in case of wind, current and storm, who lie over at Landsort and Sandham. Therefore the place has only a third-class custom house station under one surveyor, and a little department of pilots who are under control of Dalaro.

It is the end of the world — quiet, still, abandoned, except during fishing time, fall and spring, and if there comes only a single pleasure yacht during mid-summer it is greeted as an apparition from a lighter, gayer world; but fish commissioner Borg, who had come on another errand — to "spy," as the people called it — was greeted with a noticeable coolness which had found its first utterance in the indifference of the past evening and now took its expression in a miserable and cold coffee which was brought to his chamber.

Although gifted with a keen sense of taste, he

had acquired through strong exercise an ability to restrain unpleasant perceptions, therefore he swallowed the drink at a draught and arising went down to see his environment and greet the people.

When he passed the custom-house man's cottage everything was hushed and it seemed as though the occupants would make themselves invisible — they shut the doors, and stopped talking in order not to be betrayed.

With this unpleasant impression of being unwelcome, he continued his promenade out on the rock and came down to the harbor. There was a group of small huts all of the simplest construction just as though piled from pickings of stone shingles with a little smattering of mortar here and there; the chimney alone was of brick, rising above the fireplace. At one corner was a patched-up wooden addition for storage, at another only a shed of driftwood and twigs, a harbor for swine, which were shipped here during the fishing season for fattening. The windows seemed to have been taken from shipwrecks, and the roof was covered with everything that had length and width, and would absorb or shed rain — kelp, sand-oats, moss, peat, earth. These were the shelters now standing deserted, each of which housed about twenty sleepers during the big fishing season, when every hut was a kitchen bar.

Outside the most prominent shanty stood the

head man of the island, fisherman Oman, scratching out a flounder net with a whip. He did not in the least consider himself beneath a fish commissioner, nevertheless he felt a pressure from this presence and bristling up, prepared to answer sharply.

"Is the fishing good?" greeted the instructor.

"Not yet, but it may be now that the government has come to do it," answered Oman impolitely.

"Where do the stromling shoals lie?" asked the commissioner, relinquishing the government to its fate.

"Oh! we thought the instructor knew better than we did, as he is paid to teach us," said Oman.

"See here, you only know where the shoals lie, but I know where the stromling are, which is a straw nearer."

"So," rallied Oman. "If we dip into the sea we shall get fish! — well one is never too old to learn."

The wife came out of the cottage and began a lively talk with her husband, so that the commissioner found it unprofitable to confer longer with the hostile fisherman, and started toward the harbor.

Some pilots were sitting on the pier who zealously increased their conversation and seemed inclined not to notice him.

He would not turn back but continued toward the strand, leaving the habitations behind. The naked rock lay waste, without a tree, without a bush, for everything that fire could burn was destroyed. He walked along the water's edge, sometimes in fine soft sand, sometimes on stones. When he had continued an hour, always turning to the right, he found himself in the same place from which he had started, with a feeling of being in captivity. The hillock of the little island crushed him, and the sea's horizontal circle oppressed him, the old feeling of not having room enough came over him, and he climbed to the highest plateau of the hillock, which was about fifty feet above the sea level. There he lay down on his back and looked up into space. Now when his eyes could behold nothing, neither land nor sea, and he saw only the blue cupola over him, he felt free, isolated, as a cosmic particle floating in the ether only obeying the law of gravitation. He fancied he was perfectly alone upon the globe, the earth was only a vehicle in which he rode on its orbit, and he heard in the wind's faint rustle only the air draft that the planet in its speed would awake in the ether, and in the din of the waves he perceived the splashing which the liquid must make as the big reservoir rolled round its axle. All reminiscences of fellow creatures, community, law, customs, had

blown away, now that he did not see a single fragment of the earth to which he was bound. He let his thoughts run like calves let loose, dashing over all obstacles, all considerations, and therewith intoxicated himself to stupefaction, as the India navel reverencers, who forgot both heaven and earth in contemplating an inferior external part of themselves.

Commissioner Borg was not a nature worshiper any more than were those navel worshipers of India. On the contrary he was a self-conscious being, standing highest in the terrestrial chain of creation and entertained certain contempt for the lower forms of existence, understanding very well that what the self-conscious spirit produces is partly more subtle than that of the unconscious nature, and above all else has more advantages to man, who creates his creations with regard to the usefulness and beauty they may afford to their creator. Out of nature he brought forth raw material for his work, and although both light and air could be produced by machine, he preferred the sun's unexcellable ether vibrations, and the atmosphere's inexhaustible well of oxygen. He loved nature as an assistant, as an inferior who could serve him, and it pleased him that he was able to fool this powerful adversary to place its resources at his disposal.

After having lain an uncertain time and felt

the great rest of absolute solitude, freedom from influences, from pressure, he arose and went down to seek his room.

When he entered his empty chamber it re-echoed his footsteps and he felt himself entrapped. The white quadrant and rectangles that enclosed the room where he must dwell, reminded him of human hands, but of a low order, mastering only the simple forms of inorganic nature. He was enclosed in a crystal, a hexaëdron or the like, and the straight lines and the congruent surfaces, shaped his thoughts into squares, and ruled his soul in lines, simplifying it from the organic life's liberty of forms, and reduced his brain's rich tropical vegetation of changing perceptions to nature's first childish attempt at classifying.

After he had called to the girl and let her bring in his chests, he began at once the transformation of the room.

His first care was to regulate the entrance of light by a pair of heavy garnet Persian curtains, that instantly gave the room a softer tone. He opened the two leaves of the big dining table and the emptiness of the big white floor was filled at once, but the white surface of the table was still disturbing, so he concealed it under an oilcloth of a solid warm moss-green color which harmonized with the curtains and was restful. Then he

placed his book shelves against the poorest wall. This certainly was not an improvement as they only striped it in columns like a time-table, and the white plastering contrasted more against the black walnut colored wood, but he would first outline the whole before he went into details.

From a nail in the ceiling he hung his bed curtains, this made as it were, a room within the room, and the dormitory was separated from the sitting room, as though under a tent.

The long white floor planks with their black parallel cracks, where dirt from shoes, dust from furniture and clothes, tobacco ashes, scrubbing water and broom splinters, formed hot beds for fungi and hiding places for wood worms, he covered here and there with rugs of different colors and patterns, which lay like verdant blooming islets on the big white flat.

Now that there was color and warmth added to the space he began to give the finishing touches. He had first to create a forge, an altar to labor which would be the center round which everything would be grouped and radiating from it. Therefore he placed his big lamp on the writing table, it was two feet high and rose like a lighthouse upon the green cloth, its painted china stand with arabesques, flowers and animals, which bore no resemblance to ordinary ones, but gave a cheerful coloring and reminded with their

ornaments, of the human spirit's power to outrage nature's unchangeable shapes. Here had the painter transformed a stiff spear thistle to a clinging vine, and forced a rabbit to stretch himself out like a crocodile, and with a gun between his fore paws with their tiger claw nails, to aim at a hunter with a fox's head.

Round the lamp he placed a microscope, diopter, scales, plumb bobs, and a sounding rod, whose varnished brasses diffused a warm sunlight yellow.

The inkstand, a big cube of glass cut in facets, which gave it the faint blue light of water or ice, the penholders of porcupine quills which suggested animal life with their indefinite oily coloring, sticks of sealing wax in loud cinnabar, pen boxes with variegated labels, scissors with cold steel glance, cigar dishes in lac and gold, paper knife of bronze, all that mass of small trifles of use and beauty soon filled the big table abundantly with points on which the eye could rest a moment getting an impression, a memory, an impulse, keeping it always active and never fatiguing.

Now for filling the spaces in the book shelves, and blow the breath of life into the vacuum between the dark boards. There soon stood row upon row a variegated collection of reference and handbooks, from which the owner could get enlightenment on all that had happened in the

past and present time. Encyclopedias, which like an air telegraph answered with a pressure on the right letter. Text-books in history, philosophy, archeology, and natural sciences, journeys in all lands with maps, all of Baedeker's handbooks so that the owner could sit at home and plan the shortest and cheapest route to this or that place, and decide which hotel, and know how much to give in drink money. But as all of these works have an inevitable seed of decay, he had manned a special shelf with an observation corps of scientific journals from which he could immediately obtain reports concerning even the smallest advancements of knowledge, even the slightest discoveries. And at last a whole collection of skeleton keys to all present knowledge, in bibliographical notices, publishers' catalogues, booksellers' newspapers, so that he, shut up in his room, could see precisely how high or low the barometer stood with all the science that concerned him.

When he regarded the wall with the book shelf, it seemed to him as though the room was now for the first time inhabited by living beings. These books gave the impression of individuals for there were not two works of the same exterior. One was a Baedeker in scarlet and gold, like one who on a Monday morning leaves all behind him and travels away from sorrow.

Others solemn, dressed in black, a whole procession, like the Encyclopedia Britannica, and all the many paper covered ones in light, gay, easy, spring coats, the salmon red Revue des deux Mondes, the lemon yellow Comtemporaine, the rush green Fortnightly, the grass green Morgenländische. From the backs big names saluted him as acquaintances whom he had in his chamber, and here he had the best part of them, more than they could give a traveler who came on a visit to trouble their dinner naps or breakfast.

With the writing table and the book shelves placed in order, he felt himself recovered after the voyage's disturbing influences; his soul regained its strength since his implements were accessible, these instruments and books which had grown fast to his being as new senses, as other organs stronger and finer than those nature had given him as an inheritance.

The occasional attack of fear which was caused from isolation, solitude and from being pent-up with enemies — for thus he considered the fishermen, with reason — gave way before the quiet which the installment must induce, and now, the headquarters being raised, he sat down as a well-armed general to plan for the campaign.

CHAPTER THIRD

THE wind had shifted north-east during the night and the drifting ice had floated down from Aland, when the commissioner took his boat to make a preparatory investigation of the quality of the sea's bottom depth of water, sea flora and sea fauna.

A pilot who was with him as oarsman, soon became tired of giving explanations, when he saw that the commissioner by means of chart, sounding lead and other different instruments, found out facts that he had never thought of. Where the shoals lay was known to the pilot, and he also knew on which shoal the stromling nets should be set, but the commissioner was not satisfied with this and began to dredge at different depths, taking up small creatures and vegetable slime on which he believed the stromling fed. He lowered the lead to the bottom and drew up samples of clay, sand, mud, mold and gravel, which he assorted, numbered and placed in small glasses with labels.

Finally he took out a big spyglass which resembled a speaking trumpet, and looked down

into the sea. The pilot had never dreamed that one could gaze into the water with an instrument and in his astonishment asked permission to place his eye to the glass and look down into the mysteries.

The commissioner on the one hand would not play wizard, and on the other did not desire hastily to solve the problem which time would clear up, or to inspire too high hopes about the results, he therefore granted the pilot's entreaty and gave some popular explanation of the living pictures which were unfolding down in the depths.

"Do you see that seaweed upon the shoal?" began the commissioner, "and do you see that it is first olive yellow, lower down liver colored and at the bottom red? That comes from the diminution of light!"

He took a few pulls at the oars, off the shallow, and kept constantly to lee of the rock so as to keep free from the drifting ice.

"What do you see now?" he asked the man who lay on his stomach.

"Oh Jesus! I think it is stromling, and they are standing close, as close as cards in a pack."

"Do you see now that the stromling go not on the shallows only, and do you understand now that one could catch them from the depths, and do you believe now when I tell you that one ought never to fish them on the shallows where they

only go up to spawn where the eggs are reached by the sun's heat better than in deep water?"

The commissioner rowed on until he saw the water become greenish gray on account of the nature of the clay bottom.

"What do you see now?" he continued, meanwhile resting on the oars.

"I believe, on my soul, there are serpents on the sea bottom! there are real serpents' tails sticking out of the mud — and there are their heads."

"They are eels, my boy!" informed the commissioner.

The pilot looked incredulous for he had never heard of eels in the sea, but the commissioner would not give out his best card in advance or lavish long explanations over intricate things, therefore he left the oars and, taking his water telescope, leaned over the gunwale for observation.

He seemed to seek something with uncommon ardor, something that must be there, on this or that shoal but which he naturally had not seen there before, never having investigated that water.

They rowed around for two hours as the commissioner indicated, sometimes letting down his dredge, sometimes the lead line, and after each haul lying face downwards and looking through

the glass into the water. His pale face contracted from the efforts and the eyes sunk into his head while the hand which held the tube trembled and the arms seemed stiff and numb as a stake. The cold, humid wind, which passed through the pilot's jacket did not seem to bite the frail figure which was only wrapped in a half-buttoned spring coat. His eyes watered from the sea wind and the endeavor to look sharply down into the half-impenetrable element which forms three-quarters of the earth's surface, about the life of which the other quarter generally knows so little and guesses so much.

Through the water telescope, which was not of his invention, but one he had made from what he had heard from bridge builders and laborers in marine blasting, he saw down into a lower world from which the great creation above the waters had been evolved. The forest of seaweed which had just advanced over the border from inorganic to organic life, swayed in the cold bottom current and resembled whites of eggs just coagulated, borrowing their shape from the surf and recalling frost flowers, when water freezes on the window pane. Down in the depths the kelp spread out like big parks with golden leaves, over which the inhabitants of the sea bottom dragged themselves on their bellies seeking cold and obscurity, concealing their shame of being behind in their

long wandering toward the sun and air. Lowest down in the clay the flounder rests, partly dug into the ooze, lazy, immovable, without inventive faculty to develop a swim-bladder with which to raise himself, waiting a happy chance that leads the prey past his nose, without the impulse of turning the random to his advantage, and from pure laziness having twisted and stretched himself until his eyes for convenience' sake have stopped on the right side of the twisted head.

The blenny has already put one pair of oars out forward, but is loaded down by the stern and reminds one of the first trial at boat building, showing between the kelp's heraldic foliage his architectonic stone head with a Croat's mustache, lifting himself a moment from the mud to sink again immediately into it.

The lump sucker with its seven ridges goes with a keel to the air, the whole fish one enormous nose, smelling only for food and females, lighting for a moment the blue-green water with its rose-colored belly, spreading a faint aurora around him down in the gloom, and hugging again quickly a stone with his sucker to await the issue of the millions of years, which shall bring delivery to those left behind in the endless path of evolution.

The dreadful sea scorpion, that fury incarnate, with malice expressed in the spines of its face,

whose swimming limbs are claws, but more for torturing than for attack or defense, lying on one side pining for enjoyment, and caressing his own body with his slimy tail.

Higher up in lighter and warmer water swims the handsome but profound thinking perch, perhaps the most characteristic fish of the Baltic Sea, well built and steady but still somewhat clumsy as a Koster boat, bearing the peculiar blue-green color of the Baltic and a Norseman's temper, part philosopher part pirate, a sociable hermit, a superficial creature who likes to seek the depths, and sometimes reaches them, idle and eccentric. He stands during long leisure moments and stares at the stones on the beach until awakening he darts off like an arrow, tyrant against his own but soon tamed, returns willingly to the same place, and harbors seven intestinal worms.

And then the eagle of the sea, the king of Baltic fishes, the light-built, cutter-rigged pike, who loves the sun and, as the strongest, needs not shun the light, who stands with his nose at the surface of the water, sleeping with the sun in his eyes, dreaming of the flowery fields and birch pastures yonder, where he can never go, and of the thin blue cupola which arches over his wet world, where he would smother, and yet where the birds are swimming lightly with their feathery pectoral-fins.

The boat had come between floating pieces of ice which cast moving shadows over the kelp parks on the bottom, like scattered clouds. The commissioner, who had searched several hours without finding what he sought, lifted the telescope out of the water, dried it and laid it aside.

Then he dropped upon the stern sheets and holding his hand before his eyes as though to rest them from impression, seemed buried in sleep for some minutes after which he gave the pilot a signal to row on.

The commissioner, who had given his attention the whole forenoon to the depth seemed now for the first time to observe the grand panorama which was unfolding on the sea surface. Ultramarine blue the water segment extended some distance ahead of the boat, until the drifting ice showed a perfect artic landscape. Islands, bays, coves, and sounds marked as on a map, and where the ice rode up on the reef, mountains had formed, through one block pressing down another and the following climbing up on the preceding. Over the rocks the ice had likewise piled up, made arches, formed caves and built towers, church-ruins, casemates, bastions. The enchantment in these formations lay in the fact that they seemed to have been shaped by an enormous human hand, for they had not the unconscious nature's chance forms, they reminded of human

inventions in past historical periods. There had blocks piled into Cyclopean walls, arranged themselves in terraces as the Assyrian-greek temple, here had the waves through repeated impact dug out a Roman barrel vault, and fretted a round arch, which had sunken to an Arabian moresque, out of which the sunbeams and the spray from the waves had hacked out stalactites and bicelles, and here out of an already heaped wall, the whole wave front had eaten a line of arches of a Roman aqueduct, there stood the foundation to a mediæval castle, marking the remains of tumble down lancet arches, flying buttresses and pinnacles.

This fluctuation of thoughts between arctic landscapes and historicized architecture brought the contemplator into a peculiar frame of mind, out of which he was drawn by the noisy life which roving flocks of birds were making all around on floating islands of ice and on the clear blue waters.

In flocks of hundreds and hundreds floated the eider ducks, which were resting here, while waiting for open water to Norrland. The insignificant rust brown females were surrounded by the gorgeous males, who floated high with their snow white backs, sometimes rising for a short flight, exposing their soot black breasts. Loons in small flocks showing their miniver breasts, their rep-

tile necks and drooping checkered wings. Legions of lively, long-tailed ducks in black and white, swimming, diving, skimming. The guillemots and sea parrots in small bands, mournful coal black scoters in marauding parties, contrasting with goosanders and red-breasted mergansers, a more brilliant retinue with panaches on their necks, and over the whole diving and fluttering host of birds that live an amphibious life hovered the mews and gulls, which had already selected the air for their element, only using the water for fishing and bathing.

Smuggled into this industrial world of labor, on the point half hidden sat a solitary crow, his low brow, his doubtful color, his thievish manner, his criminal type, great shyness for water, and dirty look made him an object of hatred to the strugglers who knew the nest plunderer, the egg sucker.

From the whole of this winged world, whose throats could set atmospheric air in vibration, above the heads of the mutes down in the water, was heard an accordant sound, from the reptile's first faint trial to utter wrath by hissing, up to the music from the harmonious vocal organs of man. There hissed his mate as a viper when the eider duck would bite her neck and trample her under the water, there quacked the goosander as a frog, and the terns shrieked and mews cawed, the gulls

emitted childlike cries, the eider ducks cooed as male cats in rut time, but highest over all and therefore the most charming, sounded the long-tailed ducks' wonderful music, for as yet it was not a song. An untuned triad in major, sounding as the herdsman's horn, no matter how or when it struck in with the three notes of the others making an incomplete accord, a canon for the hunting horn without end or beginning, reminiscences from the childhood of the human race, from the earliest ages of the herdsman and the hunter.

It was not with the poet's dreamy fancy, with gloomy and therefore disquieting feelings and confused perceptions, that the contemplator enjoyed the big drama. It was with the calm of the investigator, the awakened thinker, that he viewed the relations in this seeming confusion, and it was only through the accumulated vast material of recollections that he could connect all these objects viewed with each other. He searched for the causes of the mighty impression of especially this nature, and when he found answers, he experienced the immense enjoyment that the most highly developed in the chain of creation must feel, when the veils are lifted from the occult, the bliss which has followed every creature on the infinite course toward light, and which perhaps constitutes the driving power forwards

to knowledge from dreaming, a bliss which must resemble that of a supposed conscious creator who is cognizant of what he has done.

This landscape took him back to Primeval Ages, when the earth was covered with water and the tops of the highest mountains were beginning to rise above the surface. These islands around him still retained their primeval character with the earliest formed crust of granite up in daylight.

Down in the water, where the algæ of the period of cooling appeared, swam the Primary Age fishes and among them their oldest descendant, the herring, whilst on the islands still grew carboniferous ferns and lichens. Farther in on the mainland, but first on the largest islets, the Secondary Age's pines and reptiles would be found, and still farther in, the deciduous trees and mammals of the Tertiary Age, but out here in primeval formation whimsical nature seemed to have leaped over the stratification periods and thrown seals and otters down in primeval times, casting in the ice period on the morning of this day in the quarto period, just as soil on primitive rocks, and he himself was sitting as a representative of the historical times, undisturbed by the evident confusion, enjoying these living pictures of creation and raising the enjoyment through feeling himself the highest in this chain.

The secret of the fascination of the landscape was that it, and only it offered a historicized creation with exclusions and abbreviations, where one in a few hours could roam through the series of formations of the earth and finally stop at oneself; where one could refresh himself with a résumé of perceptions, that led the thoughts back to the origin, resting in the past stages, relaxing the fatiguing tension to win higher degrees on the scale of culture, just as to relapse into a wholesome trance and feel one with nature. It was such moments that he used as a compensation for the past-away religious enjoyments, when thoughts of heaven were only an exchanged shape of incentive forward and the feeling of immortality was disguised uttering of the foreknowledge of the indestructibility of matter.

How serene to feel oneself at home on this earth, which was delineated to him in childhood as the valley of lamentation, which was only to be wandered through on the way to the unknown; how firm and full of trust to have gained knowledge of what was unknown before, to have been permitted to have seen into, to have looked through God's hitherto secret counsel, as it was called, all those events which were regarded impenetrable, and therefore at that time could not be penetrated. Now man had reached perspicuity about human origin and purpose, but instead of

becoming weary and going to rest as one cultured nation after another have done when they have thought until destroyed, the now living generation had taken its part and acquiesced in finding themselves to be the highest animals, and exerted themselves in a judicious way actually realizing the heaven idea here, therefore the present time was the best and greatest of all times, it has carried humanity farther forward than centuries before had been able to do.

After these moments of devotional exercise in thoughts of his origin and destiny, the commissioner let his mind run over his personal evolution, as far back as he could trace it, just as though to search for his own self, and in the past stages read his probable fate.

He saw his father, a deceased fortification major of that undecided type of the beginning of the century, mixed as a conglomerate, and cemented of fragments from preceding periods, picked at random after the great eruption at the end of the past century, believing in nothing because he had seen everything perish, everything taken up anew, all forms of state tested, greeted with jubilee at reception, worsted within a few years, brought forth again as new and greeted over again as a universal discovery, he had at last stopped at the existing state as the only palpable, it may have come from a leading will, which was

improbable, or from a combination of chances which was tolerably sure, but dangerous to say. Through study at the university his father had come into the pantheism of the young-Hegelians, which was a feint at turning the current which had then reached its height, and individuals had become the only reality and God became the comprehension of the personal in humanity. The living idea about the intimate relation of man to nature, that man himself stood highest in line in the chain of the world's process, characterized an élite corps of personalities, who silently despised the repeated attempts of political visionaries to place themselves above the governing laws of nature, trying in an artificial way to make new laws for the world through philosophical systems and congressional decrees. Unobserved they passed on of no use to either high or low, above they saw mediocrities through natural selection amassing around a mediocre monarch, below they found ignorance, credulity and blindness, while between these two classes the burghers were bent on business interests so positively that those who were not merchants themselves were unable to work together with them. As they were qualified, prudent and trustworthy they were occasionally promoted to positions of influence, but as they could not join with any party and had no desire to make a useless individual opposition and were

not numerous enough to form a herd, besides as strong individualists would not follow a bell-cow, they remained pretty quiet carrying their discontent hidden under big crosses and decorations and smiled as augurs when they met at the councilor's table or in the house of noblemen, letting the world pass as it might.

The father belonged to certainly not a very old noble family, but one which through civil merits in retrieving the mining business and not through doubtful exploits of war gained by the help of nature's chances or an enemy's false step, had been rewarded by a coat of arms and moderate privileges, such as to wear a nobleman's uniform and unpaid to participate in one-fourth of the ponderous administration of the country. He counted himself therefore a meritorious noble and was conscious of having come from talented ancestors, which acted as a spur down to their now living representative. Property legally acquired through the qualities and labors of his ancestors gave him the opportunity to perfect himself in his calling. He became a prominent topographer, and had participated in the building of Göta canal and in the first railroad constructions. This employment at a whole kingdom, which he had become used to look at from above and to take in at one glance on the map spread over a writing table, gave his mind gradually the

habit of seeing everything on a grand scale. There he sat with a rule opening communication lines which would change the whole physiognomy of the landscape, leveling old cities and creating new, changing the prices of products, seeking for new resources. The maps should change, the old water ways be forgotten and the black straight lines which indicated the new roads would be the determinative. The heights should be just as fertile as the valleys, the combat of the rivers should cease, frontiers between realms and countries should no more be observed.

There followed a strong feeling of power through this handling of the fates of lands and peoples, and he could not escape gradual seizures of the propensity accompanying power, to overestimate himself. Everything miraged in a bird's-eye-view, countries became maps and human beings tin soldiers, and when the topographer in a few weeks ordered the leveling of a height, which would have needed thousands of years to be denuded by natural agencies, he felt something of the creator in himself. When he ordered tunnels bored, transferred sand ridges to lakes, and filled up marshes, he did not fail to perceive that he had taken in hand a remodeling of the earth ball, throwing the natural geological formations topsy-turvy, and therewith his personal feelings swelled incredibly.

Hereto was added his position as officer with numerous subordinates, whom he only communicated with as one in authority, and who consequently were considered as service muscles to his big determining brain.

With a military's physical courage and resolution, the profoundness of a savant, the full deliberation of a thinker, the calm of one financially independent, and the dignity and self-esteem of a man of honor, he exhibited a type of the highest rank, where beauty and prudence combined to produce a well-measured, harmonious personality.

In this father the son had both a prototype and a teacher, the mother having died early. To spare the son the bitterness of miscalculations, and disapproving the whole current method of education, which with books of tales and terrifying histories, educated the children to be children instead of men, he raised at once the whole curtain of the temple of life and initiated the youth in the difficult art of life; taught him the intimate connection between human beings and the remainder of the creation, where certainly the human being stood highest on his planet, but still continued to remain a part of the creation, able in a measure to modify the action of the forces in nature but nevertheless ruled by them, this was a rational nature worship if nature signifies everything existing, and worshiping is an acknowledgment of

the dependency of the existing laws of nature. By this he removed Christianity's mania for greatness of individuals, fear of the unknown, death and God, and created a prudent man, watchful of his actions and personally accountable for his deeds. The regulator of the lower propensities of human beings he found in the organ, which through its perfected form separates the human being from the beasts, the cerebrum. Judgment, founded on liberal knowledge should govern, and when necessary suppress the lower propensities to keep up a higher type. Nourishment and propagation were the lowest impulses, and therefore in common with the plants. The sensibilities, as the animals' lower rudiments of thinking were called, because they were localized in the arteries, spinal cord and other lower organs, must be absolutely subordinate to the cerebrum in a human being of the highest type, and the individuals, who could not regulate their lower impulses but were thinking with their spinal cord, were of the lower form. Therefore the old man warned against believing in youthful enchantment and enthusiasm, which could just as easily lead to crime as to virtue. This, however did not exclude the great passions of universal benefit, which did not belong to the feelings but were powerful utterances of the will toward good. All that youth could produce was completely

worthless, for as a rule it lacked originality, being only the pure thoughts of older predecessors which the after-coming youths had taken up as their own and with great gestures would spread abroad. Originality could only be said to develop when the brain had matured, just as true propagation with a following education of the offspring could only take place when man had reached virility and had the ability to provide means for existence and education of the children. A sure sign of the immature brain's inability to judge was the constant Grössenwahn, in which youth and women were living. Youth has its future before it, as is habitually said, but that assertion is shattered because manhood shows a less per cent. of mortality than youth, and the unwitty reply that if youth is a fault it passes away in time, does not overturn the precept, that youth is a present defect, an imperfection, thus a fault, which is admitted by the acknowledgment that it can pass away, for that which never existed cannot pass away. All youthful attacks on the existing are hysterical spells of the inability of the weak to bear pressure, an evidence of the same lack of prudence as in the hornet when attacking a human being to its own sure destruction. As a good illustration of the want of judgment and syllogism in the youths he brought forth the book Robinson Crusoe, which was written for the plain purpose

of showing the inferiority of a life under natural conditions and isolation, and yet for a century it had regularly been misunderstood by youths as a psalm to savage life while the book represented it as a punishment for the foolish youth who abused culture's wealth like a savage. This little trait at the same time showed of how much lower ontological form youth was, betraying it in his sympathy for Indians and other rudimentary laggers-behind, just as the feelings which eventually would be laid aside, like the thyroid gland, which has come into disuse by human beings but still remains on its old place.

When the son could not refute these bitter truths with rational arguments, declaring that his feelings, yes his most sacred feelings, rose against such a dry tenet, the father declared him to be a hornet which was still thinking with ganglia, and he warned him against dissolute fancies, or conclusions on insufficient ground and want of great material, not to be mistaken for scientific quick-reasoning, where from seemingly few premises — appearing few because the middle terms were omitted — new conclusions could be drawn, when, as if by a chemical union, two older ideas enter each other and form a new thought. Ontogenism had shown how the human fœtus was developed through all the earlier stages from the amœba through the frog and up to the anthropomorphic,

how then could the youth question but that the spirit of a child must pass through the history of man through the animal and the savage upward, as long as the body was growing and that consequently man stood far ahead of youth! He warned him especially not to let the lowest of all our propensities, the sexual impulse cloud his judgment, for by its power it had so long dazzled sound reason, that erudite men still bore the superstition that woman was as high a type as man, yes even higher according to the opinion of some men, whereas she really is but an intermediate form between man and child, as is shown by the fœtal development, where the male at a certain stage is female but the female never male. To warn the young man of the danger of being overpowered by sexual impulses, was the same as to cast a shadow on woman, and the son soon commenced to make what the father called ganglionic conclusions, the bearing of which was that the Lieutenant-Colonel was a woman hater. And how could he do otherwise, when always hearing his father narrating how this or that man had thrown away his future on affairs with women, and how great geniuses had wasted their talents by procreation, and sacrificed happiness and position for a wife, who had been faithless and children who died before of mature age. Propagation was only for the lesser spirits, the

greater ones should live in their works, and so forth.

Under such guidance the son grew up. He was born an unusually delicate child but with a harmoniously developed body; he had finely organized senses, quick and sure perception, keen understanding and a nobility of mind which manifested itself in forbearance and approachableness to mankind. He understood early how to regulate his life, to suppress the plant and animal propensities, and when he had accumulated a vast material of observations and knowledge, he began to work it up. His brain soon showed its prolific capacity — from a couple of known quantities to find the wanted unknown, from old thoughts to produce new ones, in a word the capacity of what is called originality. He was the coming regenerator and possessed ability to see the inter-relations in disorder, to discover the invisible force behind the phenomena, and even the concealed and extremely compound motives in the actions of men. Therefore his schoolmates looked upon him with suspicion, and the teachers discerned in him a silent critic of what they communicated as unalterable facts.

His arrival at the university occurred contemporarily with the great popular movements which concerned the parliamentary reform. Borg perceived well the defects of the representation by a

four-class system, while the state consists of at least twenty classes with different interests and different abilities to judge in so complicated a problem as that of the government of a people, but on the other hand he could not consent to revert to the organization of the hord or tribe where everybody had equally much or equally little to say. He perceived at once that this simplifying of the method of governing, where the multitude should do it was not a reform suited to the needs of the time, moreover he had lately seen the right of universal suffrage in France produce an Emperor and a sham representation of lawyers, merchants and army officers, with the exclusion of laborers, farmers, savants and scientific men, thus only three classes, arbitrarily selected by the Emperor, were represented. He had calculated that the most correct would be a perfect class representation with proportional rights of representation, well balanced according to the interests of the respective classes and with due consideration given to the highest interests, or the higher right of the wise to own the preponderance, as they promote progress more than the ignorant. This, to be sure, the authors of the two chamber systems had already had in mind, when they perceived the necessity of referring questions to committees and disentangling certain questions by special committees, even by com-

mittees of experts. To complete the assembly, so that all interests would be guarded and all points taken and all information of the condition of the realm made accessible, each class of people, from the highest to the lowest, should elect representatives in proportion partly to their numbers and partly to their importance for the advancement of the country as a whole. Neglecting the Royal Court, which together with the monarch ought to be assorted under the foreign department, to which they properly belong, for the monarch is only permitted to represent the nation before foreign powers, this consultative, though not a legislative, class parliament would be constructed as follows, viz., First class: land owners and renters, tenants, overseers, foremen on farms and so forth. The second class: operators of mines and quarries, manufacturers and their laborers. Third class: merchants, mariners, pilots, hotel owners, porters, hackmen, and all employed in banks, custom houses, postal service, railroads and telegraphs. Fourth class: civil and military officers, clergymen, with servants, janitors and privates. Fifth class: savants, teachers, literateurs, and artists. Sixth class: physicians, apothecaries, superintendents of poorhouses. Seventh class: house owners, capitalists and rentiers.

In what proportion to elect from each class

was the question, which could not be solved off hand, but it was necessary that skillful men with knowledge in the science of government should probe the new order of representation, which would therefore only and always be provisional. Over this consultative assembly should sit a council of specialists in the science of government, who had been professionally trained for that difficult calling, so that this most complicated of all arts would not be pursued by bunglers and enterprising amateurs, as had hitherto been done, and statesmen's accession to office would be preceded by a careful investigation of their past life, their private financial and social situation. This would spur youth to self-education and heedfulness of what they were doing, and would form a body of excellent men, while so called irreproachable conduct, or negative virtue, without talents would not as hitherto be the short cut to advancement. This would constitute the new nobility which would succeed the old military and court nobility, and the fact that this nobility established itself only through a natural selection of the fittest was a guarantee that the country would be ruled in the best manner. The Reichstag by only having to vote an opinion, not any decision, would thus furnish a vast material of investigation, not a legionary army that could be bribed and wheedled to commit voting outrages.

The young man, however, was too prudent to express his opinions, at a period, when noblemen were synonymous with the degenerated, left behind and blasé, and the masses were pushing so blindly forward that the mechanics were the ones that worked mostly into the hands of their coming class enemies, the peasants; a prudent man could only smile and wait. And he waited until he saw the four-chamber system succeeded by a one-class representation, when the realm was henceforth governed by the former peasantry alone. These historical events had, however, a very great influence in directing the young man's thoughts and development. He had there seen in what terrible confusion the thought mechanism of the majority was, and when he read the protocols of the Reichstag, and noticed the speeches of the most influential and brilliant speakers, he observed that what he called ganglionic reasoning, causing valvular contraction and congestion of the heart, exerted the greatest influence on the public opinion. It seemed to him sometimes as though it was not the question of the fatherland or progress, but only the motionary's triumph to gain his own will by fallacies, gross blunders in logic and hideous distortions of facts. In him was aroused, through observation, the great suspicion that everything was intended as a struggle for power,

for the enjoyment of using the power of the brain for putting other brains into consonance, of sowing seeds of thought in the brain bark of others, where they would grow as parasites like the mistletoe, while the mother tree would proudly lift her shoulders at the thought that the parasites up in the crown still were nothing but parasites. This was the foundation of his ambition, to satisfy which required knowledge and experience through study, travel and conversation with learned and illustrious men. In the midst of this eternally movable chaos of contending forces and interests, he sought a place of anchorage for his being, the center of the sphere which reality threw around him — in himself. Instead of, like weak Christians assuming an external support in God, he took the real, palpable in his own self and sought to create his personality to a perfect type of man whose life and deeds would not violate anyone's rights, convinced that the fruit of a well-nursed tree could not fail to be of use and rejoicing to others. All the confusion and awkwardness that he saw in the struggles of those who say they are living for others while in reality they only live on others, on others' gratitude, others' opinion and others' acknowledgment, he avoided, holding his own straight course convinced that a single great and strong individual could not help

doing more good than these masses of thoughtless people whose numbers stand in inverse ratio to their usefulness.

By this setting of his *ego* he enforced a norm for his life, which led him to a high degree of morality, for, instead of relinquishing the final settlement to the uncertain hereafter, he regulated his deeds so that he had nothing left unsettled, he did not shift the blame from himself to an innocently suffering Christ, but in conscious self-responsibility he committed no acts that would awaken the need of a scapegoat.

Thereby he learned to rely only upon himself and never to take advice, always reflecting on the probable consequences of an act. This did not prevent him from suffering with nervousness like his generation, which was born and brought up during the period of steam and electricity when the vital activity was increased in speed. How could it be otherwise considering that he must destroy millions of old brain cells, storages for antiquated impressions, that every moment when he would form a judgment, he must carefully sift out superannuated axioms, which tried to come forward as premises. It was a work of total reconstruction which caused these disorders in the nervous system which are all laid to our ancestors' alcoholism and sexual excesses, but which pathological symptom was an uttering of increased

vitality accompanied by extreme sensibility, like the craw fish when it shifts its shell, or the bird when molting. It was the regeneration of a genus or at least a variety of man which appeared to the old as diseased or unsound because it was in a process of development, something that they were disinclined to acknowledge as they themselves would be the norm and called themselves sound, although they were in a state of decomposition.

This nervous sensibility of the growing youth was enhanced by moderation in eating and drinking, and vigorous disciplining of the sexual desires. He found it debasing to place oneself into the ungovernable state of a lunatic or a savage through the use of fermented drinks, and his soul was far too aristocratic to play a moment's illicit love with a prostitute. With this, however, followed an increasing acuteness of the senses and a sensibility to disagreeable impressions which sometimes brought him disgust where others of a coarser nature would have found enjoyment.

Thus he felt abased for a few hours when his morning coffee was not strong enough, and a poorly painted billiard ball or a soiled cue constrained him to turn away in search of another place. A badly wiped glass raised his loathing and he felt the smell of human being on a newspaper which another had read, while he could on

others' furniture see human grease deposited on the polish, and he always opened the window when the maid had arranged the room. However, if he was traveling and necessity constrained, then he could shut off, as it were, all conduits from his organs of perceptions and harden himself against all disagreeable sensations.

When he had completed his studies at the University, in natural science, that least dependent of all sciences, because opinion plays a lesser roll than a collection of material, he received a place as assistant in the Royal Academy of Science.

He had applied for a situation here for the purpose of obtaining a view of the kingdoms of nature, collected and classified in one place, and if possible to read therein and discover the great connection if there was any, or the universal confusion which probably was there. His intentions soon became manifest, especially when he could no longer avoid the danger of their enticing from him, his project to classify the birds after an entirely different method than the current one. The professors, who of course did not want to be lowered to collectors of material for a young man, and were not willing to become obsolete with their works, took an instinctive aversion to the scrutinizer. The first obstacle to the intruder was made by placing him to detail work of a subordinate character which was disgusting to his sense

of beauty, during six months he had to change alcohol in the fish collection; at first he was retching from the nauseating odor, but after he had overcome this disagreeable perception he turned furiously to the study of the fishes, and as he worked rapidly he had inside of the half year thoroughly studied the great material. He had been standing the whole winter in a cold, dirty and semi-dark kitchen where he had been smelling bad alcohol, frozen his hands and contracted a severe chronic cystitis.

Afterwards he was set to writing labels for the algæ. As he had received no instructions in calligraphy at the University and by nature he had a weak, unsteady hand, all the labels were discarded and he gained the name of being useless.— He could not even write.— But in two months, during which time he attended a writing school, and in the evenings sat at home over writing book and copy, he acquired a beautiful and legible hand and at the same time gained a more complete knowledge of the algæ than he had before, while into the bargain he learned the inestimable art of penmanship. The professors who had thought he would reject such subordinate work soon saw what kind of grit he had and that he understood how to use all adversities for his benefit, increasing his knowledge while turning aside softly from the leash and warding off the blows.

His improved penmanship was to be a new source of humiliations, for he was now placed at copying office records and letters, sinking finally, as they believed, to an ordinary copyist's rôle. Without complaining he took the occupation and, at the same time learning foreign languages, he had the opportunity of glancing into the secrets of all these great men, which they thought would be worthless to him. Thus he saw the scientific questions of the period, debated through correspondence and he discovered the ways to the secret meetings of learned societies, gained knowledge about the subterranean passages to distinction, and the opportunities to make his investigations fruitful. Thus he was unassailable, and just as they believed they had crushed him he arose again.

It was owing to this double quality of nobleman and independent thinker, that he became isolated. His name did not sound scientific and his fine and modern way of dressing was taken as a proof of unscientific sense by those who remembered Berzelius' ragged pants; his patient and apparent submission was taken as inferiority, and all his meditations over science, as poetical effusions. Regretting to have let him come behind the curtain, and in order to press him down again they now placed him at another work which had been rejected by every newcomer, and was called the proving stone. There was in the garret a rem-

nant collection of stones and minerals, which had come together partly through gifts and legacies and partly through circumnavigations and explorations, and as most of it had been discarded as duplicates, at a time when geology was in its infancy, increasing knowledge demanded that they again be overhauled and assorted. They were placed in an attic room beneath the rooftiles and lay in a big heap decidedly covered with dust and cobwebs. Borg who must now stand bent beneath the heated rooftiles and inhale the dust, was about to give it up, but when on the second day he found a new mineral which he suspected to be unknown, he at once applied himself to the work and started classifying. During this he made observations which shook his already faint belief in the whole system of the science, and he commenced seeing that the stones were not classified by nature but it was the brain that classified the phenomena. Besides, everything might be classified if one could only decide upon a basis of division, and he soon saw that the basis employed here was not the most rational one, the very foundation being an unsettled hypothesis; for instance, that the primitive rocks had been formed through melting by fire, contrasting with the stratified rocks which were positively regarded as deposited in water; but some of the primitive rocks were also stratified like the younger sedi-

mentary formations; then he found that all of it was twisted and guessed at and the whole system founded on guess work. In the meanwhile he had analyzed his mineral and found that it was hitherto unknown, whereupon he gave it to the professor who sent it to the Berlin Academy and got his name attached to the new mineral. Borg received no thanks, no mention, only a few taunting words from the professor. Irritated thereby he undertook himself to describe the next mineral which he found to be new and sent it to Lyell; his paper was read in the Geological Society, of which he was made a member. Comrades and superiors pretended to be ignorant of his success, which was in a measure disparaging to the professor who had overlooked the unknown mineral, and now repugnance grew into hate which developed to persecution. But he turned aside, made himself invisible and worked. This collection of minerals being gathered from all countries in Europe, and as Borg understood how to give to each discovery a touch of direct usefulness for the science of mining in the respective countries, he succeeded in two years to gain membership in most of the learned societies of Europe, and was decorated with badges of the Italian Crown Order, the French "Instruction publique," the Austrian Leopold order and the Russian St. Annae order, second class. But nothing availed among his

surroundings, and the laughter increased at each mark of distinction which was nevertheless merited. When they could not deny the facts, they underrated their value or pretended to be ignorant of what had happened, which, however, did not prevent them from using his trodden path in their own hunt.

When at last after seven years of tormenting service he inherited a legacy from his father, who had died, and he retired from service to travel abroad as a private man, he heard alternately that he had failed in his calling and that it was a pity that he did not become anything, or that he had been discharged from office. It was with boundless disdain for human beings that he left his country to continue his studies abroad. In hotels and pensions all over Europe he met many kinds of people with whom he formed acquaintances which were soon broken by circumstances. But everywhere he saw how people of the same period expressed the same mind about the same things, pronounced the opinion of the majority as their own, spoke phrases in place of thoughts, and he discovered thereby that it really was the thoughts of a few spirits that were ruminated by the masses. Thus he found that all geologists spoke Agassiz' and Lyell's ideas from 1830 and '40, all religious free thinkers exhaled Renan and Strauss, all brisk politicians were living on Mill

or Buckle, and all who spoke up-to-date literature cast up Taine. It was then only a few main batteries which had an annunciator and which could through the conducting wires from their talents set all the small bells tinkling. Through this he soon came to the domain of psychology, visited spiritualists, hypnotizers and mind readers, saw behind these swindles some new discoveries which would surely change humanity in its mode of living thoughtlessly as cattle, perhaps contribute towards adjusting the thought mechanism, and show that this whole battle about opinions is only a strife for the power to set other people's brains in motion, to force the masses to think as I. He had been a witness to scientific encounters which had resulted in a conquest for the wrong opinion, only because the victor had sufficient authority and was supported by a majority. He had seen political and religious combats and in a legislation directly contrary to sound reason and justice, founded on approved errors, which were inherited by succeeding generations as self-evident truths.

Yes, surely it concerned only how to make one's own will valid, and the whole driving power behind the vindication of opinions were interest and passion. Interest, it was nothing else than need, a need of food and love, and to gain these required a certain amount of power. Whoever did

not strive for power was a weak one, whose desire of life was attenuated, therefore the weak was always heard to demand rights, the rights of the weak, while there was only a mathematical justice given, an arithmetical truth, for the calculating of which was required a strong mind capable of emancipating itself from the delusions of interest and passions. When he searched his inner self and compared himself with a great many others, he found that through a strict self-education he had freed his judgment to a high degree, and that in him was a specially developed thrift to seek abstract justice, that truth which consists in the actual conditions, the pith of fact, why he called himself a friend of truth in the highest sense, although not prompted thereby to tell all his thoughts abroad nor prevented from replying to importunate questions, when need be, with a prevarication.

In order to trace more closely the organization of the man-brute he designed a special study of the mental faculties of all the lower animals and thus guided himself up to man. He then made a ledger over all the individuals that came in his way, from relatives, nurses, maids, to schoolmates, university comrades, society friends and superiors, in one word all who came within the circle of his observation. This he completed through a collection of personalia, baptismal cer-

tificates, and the testimonies of their acquaintances; he wrote down their equation and tried a solution of the problem of their life. It was an incredible amount of working material. When he had straightened out the confusion he saw that the human beings could be divided just as the animals and plants into large classes, orders and families according to the basis chosen. By taking several bases he came pretty near to the truth and threw the fullest illumination upon the object of his observation.

Among other things he made a diagram of the human beings, with three subdivisions, conscious, self-deceivers and unconscious. The conscious or initiated stood highest, had discerned the deceit and believed in nothing and nobody, and were usually called skeptics, feared and hated by the self-deceivers, but recognized each other at once and usually parted with the word rascal, and reciprocal accusations of bad motives. As self-deceivers he counted all religious believers, hypnotic mediums, prophets, party chiefs, politicians, charity spirits, and the whole swarm of weak ambitious ones who pretend to live for others. To the unconscious belonged children, most criminals, most women and some idiots, all of whom still live on the semi-mammalian plane without the ability to distinguish between subject and object.

Proceeding from another basis, or by ontogenesis from the fœtus up to the highest standard of man, he got as the result, children, youths, women and men.

He also used to search among his countrymen for ancestral race marks, distinguished the central Swedes from the southern Swedes, could see the Norwegian in the Vermlanders and Bohuslanders, pointed out the Finn in some of the Norrlanders, kept record of immigrated Germans, Wallons, Shemites and gypsies, which often gave him the key to various traits in otherwise inexplicable characters.

He also had another basis for a division of characters according to the dominant, as he called it, and he got the nutritive as the lowest group including epicures, drunkards and the avaricious, the sexualic or licentious, the affective or sensitive, and the intellectual or thinkers who stood highest.

This science he developed to a high degree, and after some time acquired the ability to judge human beings and give their equations. To verify the truth of his observations he used himself as a psychological preparation, cut himself up bodily, experimented with himself and grafted fistulas and fontanelles, subjecting himself to unnatural and often repulsive spiritual diet, but carefully guarded faults of observation, and avoided form-

ing a norm for others by his own sayings and doings.

When he had finally become weary of traveling abroad, and his soul was longing for its *milieu,* he returned home to seek a sphere of activity. As it was immaterial to him what his occupation might be he applied for the position of fish commissioner. As they were not anxious to have him too near he was appointed as the first man of the inlet to Stockholm.

. . . . . .

Here he awoke from the review of his evolution, from which he used to regenerate himself by hastily living his life over again, thereby tracing, as it were, his standpoint and, calculating his resources, he cleared his course onward to his probable destiny and his prospects of succeeding in his enterprises.

The pilot, who in the meantime had rowed the boat behind the rocks and in lee of the ice cakes, had already decided that the Doctor, who was sitting with introverted, expressionless eyes, was a little freaky, took the occasion to ask if they should turn toward the harbor, whereto the commissioner nodded consent.

Once more he glanced at the magnificent panorama yonder, where the ice floes were driven onward, rent asunder, packed themselves, crowded together, pushed over each other, turned on edge,

changed their horizontal position to big upheavals and tilting of the strata, forming mountains, dales and hills. It seemed to him as though he beheld the earth's crust being born, when on the incandescent sea the first hard cake was broken to pieces, driven forward, pushed on edge, piled in heaps to form the primitive mountains, skerries, rocks, islets, which were but enormous packs of ice, icebergs, although formed from another mineral than water. Over this repetition of the history of creation vibrated the primitive, undivided white light of the ice beside the deep blue of air and water, the first breaking of the darkness, and here the God of the saga of creation who separated light from darkness, came forth as a sensible explanation to his investigating mind. Once again the first attempt at harmonious sounds of the reptiles, now transformed into birds, rang out over the watery circle, the limitation of himself, which must be the center wherever he went. . . .

The boat floated into harbor, the smoke was rising from the chimneys, it was dinner time.

CHAPTER FOURTH

ONE Sunday forenoon the fish commissioner sat at his open window; the early summer had just come, there was a light blue color on the water and a faint verdure in the crevices of the rocks, on the insignificant remains of lichens and mosses. The flocks of birds had gone north and only segregated pairs of eider ducks were swimming, two by two, in the coves. The great solitude, as he called the Baltic Sea, impressed him this day as he saw one vessel after another steering southward under foreign flags with lively colors, perhaps coming accidentally, perhaps regularly, all of these flags more luminous than the poor blue and tawny yellow which is so easily soiled. He saw the exciting tricolor on a brig which was lumber laden from Norrland, where it had recently been with wine and oranges and was now passing down to more sunny and populous coasts. The enfeebled dannebrog on a butter schooner lay in the wake of a great German mail steamer carrying white bunting with mourning border and the Crown mark like the ace of spades, above something of red color. England's blood red standard,

the Spanish awning cloth, America's King cotton ticking, each of these was a greeting from so many foreign nations to which he felt more affianced than to those strangers whom he was condemned to call countrymen, for he had a right to carry all of these colors on his gala coat but not his own country's. And to-day, it seemed, these reminders of his cosmopolitan citizenship came to him more invigorating than usual, as during the last few days of his exile in this place he had been surrounded by a full and open enmity. He had recently undertaken to enforce a law adopted several years ago, though never applied, about a certain measure of the meshes in nets and seines, and had thereby encountered an opposition and open defiance which finally forced him to send for the sheriff who confiscated the nets. He had, however, first shown thoroughly how the interference of the government was only prompted by concern for the welfare of the people, he had held before them how they, while not wishing to divide a farm, preferring to have one son prosperous and the family maintainer, still contrived, by indiscriminate fishing, to make their children dependent of the almshouse for their support. All to no avail. All these measures and steps were regarded as the evil contrivance of a pack of idle officers who were salaried with the people's money, for the special purpose of tormenting

them. He retorted in vain, that it was the farmers in the Reichstag who had voted this law, whereupon the fishermen turned their hate towards the farmers and government alike.

He observed that these fishing people really represent a remnant of the aboriginal community, careless and inconsiderate, without the peasant's forethought for the morrow and next year. They were like the savage who hunts two days and sleeps eight, and like the savage they possessed certain negative faculties to do without, and endure, but lacked the positive ability to improve their situation through investigation, having a decided and instinctive dislike for innovation, thereby betraying their inability to adapt themselves to a higher stage of culture. All these fishermen were bottom sediments of the country's population; when the battle over fertile river valleys and lake margins was going on they could not maintain their own, and fled or were pressed out to the headlands where the soil ceased and only the uncertain water left its winnings. Like gamblers they were as unreliable as fortune, unscrupulous in their dealings, drawing small advances beforehand from the ever expected great fishing, which a lucky shipwreck might bring them. Therefore their hate immediately kindled towards the new comer, and in their blindness they

could not see how he would if from ambition only improve their condition and free them from labor. For instance, one duty of the head pilot was to make meteorological reports; for him he had constructed a self-regulating wind measure from cleft sardine boxes, which, however, was not accepted but placed in the garret. He had offered to assist in cases of sickness but had been rejected. He had offered to teach the wives how to prevent the stoves from smoking, by the application of a stromling barrel as a flue at the top of the chimney, but they had made grimaces at him and continued to lament over the irremediable smoke. He would teach a fisherman, who had tried to raise potatoes unsuccessfully, how to fertilize the sandy strand with seaweed and the refuse from fish, as he had seen the people on the coast of England do with marked success; all was in vain. When he saw how the surplus of the big stromling fishing of the spring lay decaying for lack of salt, he would teach them the Faroe-islanders' method of salting with the ashes of seaweed in case of necessity and for domestic use, this same preservative being always used by said islanders in the manufacture of cheese.

The result of all his endeavors to teach them useful things, was that he received the nickname of Doctor Know-all, was regarded as a fool, and

became the laughing stock of the coffee gatherings, and drinking bouts. Even the children made faces as he passed by.

The incongruity between what he was, and what he was taken to be, impressed him at the beginning as comical, but afterwards when the hostilities succeeded the coldness he marked an unfavorable influence on his mental state. It was as though a thundercloud of unequal electricities hung over him, irritating his nerve current, trying to annihilate it through neutralization. He felt as though the thoughts directed towards him from these many would have the power to gradually drag him down, cramp his opinion of his own value, so that the moment would come when he could no longer rely upon himself and his mental superiority, and finally their views that he was the idiot and they the sound would grasp his brain and force him to agree with them.

Meanwhile as his thoughts wandered here and there a new object came within the forty-five degrees of the horizon, which he commanded at a glance from his window. A gunboat came to lee of the rock at half speed, clewed up its sails and dropped anchor. Through the marine glass he saw the sailors move about apparently in a hurly-burly, but without crowding; each one hurried to his belaying pin, his line, and his halyard, when the executive officer's whistle sounded.

The vessel's straight sides, the extended stem where the iron plates seemed to sprawl asunder but combined their concentrated force in a forward direction, radiating out as it were at the bowsprit, the exhaust pipe and the smokestack's energetic smoking, the masts striving with stay and shroud, the round circle of the cannon's mouth, everything indicated an array of forces, regulated, curbing each other, reacting and coöperating, the contemplation of which put him into a harmonic state of mind. It was to him as though power and order streamed forth from the wedge-shaped iron hull, where purpose, limitation and measure, united into a unit of beauty, and conveyed a deeper enjoyment by reflection than a handsome work of art commonly affords the superficial observer by the way of feeling.

Something else came to him through reflecting on this little floating community surrounded by water. He felt strengthened, as though he had a support in this symbol of power, that was authorized by the people's assembly and the royal government, with the appliance of all the means of culture and science, and which protected the higher developed against the pressure of barbarism from beneath; he saw with satisfaction how a couple of the most knowing, who had been qualified by due examinations, guided with a whistle this hundred of half savages, who did not

dare to pretend to understand, that which they did not understand. He had never been beguiled to commit the modern fault of observation of believing that the lower classes suffered from their subordinate position and coarse food. He knew well that they were precisely on the plane they should be, and that they suffered just as little from their station as the fishes beneath would suffer from not having been developed into amphibians, and as far as their coarse food was concerned he knew from experience when he had invited a few fishermen to dinner how they rejected all but that which filled the belly; yes, he had seen them select the poor rye in the bread basket, instead of the fine wheat. He had never believed in the talk about lack of food excepting when misfortune came and then only accidentally, for there existed state laws for the poor which are so often misused by sluggards and the shrewd, who feign sickness and force the community to support them. He had never adored the small, never needed to kneel to the insignificant, notwithstanding that he himself was cast out from the upper camp which during the common period of decay tricked itself up with stolen reputations and lay pressing down that which should grow. He did not even now let this induce him to overestimate this approximate picture of the upper stratum, which in the shape of a man-of-war in-

spired his admiration from a certain point of view, but on the other hand was a reminder of a system of state, which executed outrages on the minds with compressed gas and Bessemer cylinders.

Downstairs his host's door banged, and the tongues began to wag at the entrance of Oman, whose net had been confiscated. The gin glasses rang and the clamor rose at the repetition of yesterday's drunken spree.

"Idiots and destroyers of the people, who believe they know more than sensible fishermen and who lie on the sofa and read books, and get two thousand a year, snots, who would teach their father how to fish, a pack of thieves and cigarette heroes who go about with sow's tails under their noses . . ."

And now a wave broke against Vestman's elucidation of facts that he had gleaned on board the "Jacob Bagge" about the commissioner's extraction, his father's irregular sexual relations, his mother's low descent, and he alluded to the commissioner's discharge from his first office and so forth.

The listener tried to make himself deaf, and indifferent as usual, but the words cut him, soiled him, hurt him against his will. Old doubts about his father's integrity began to awaken, doubts of his own value were aroused and fears as to the

possibility of keeping himself dry in this rain of mud, and to avoid a fight where he perhaps would fail from nicety in choice of weapons.

Now struck the bell on the man-of-war, a drum whir rolled, and the summer wind carried the tunes of a hymn from a hundred throats out over the water, solemn, rhythmically arranged, submissive, all while the clamor and threats from downstairs rumbled as from the cages in a menagerie, and in the psalm's ferment rose to a howl, for a quarrel had arisen between the parties, at the question of taking back the net by force.

The commissioner, who regarded churches as archeological collections or interesting pagoda buildings from past times was reminded involuntarily of the utterance which a young clergyman let fall one night when at a discussion of the Christian cult.

"I do not believe in Christ's divinity and all that, but believe me, the mob must be scared!" "The mob must be scared," repeated he to himself silently, but dropped the thread immediately when he heard the fray break out downstairs. Chairs were knocked over, heels were braced and kicked against the furniture and roaring as from cattle was mixed with hissing as from reptiles while during all this a woman's voice sputtered and produced several hundred words a minute.

At this instant the steamer whistled, weighed anchor and hoisted sail, the smokestack sent a soot cloud toward the blue summer sky. It was with a feeling of regret and anxiety that he saw the steamer and its beautiful cannon disappear southward; he felt as though he had lost a support and as if the hate closed round him like a sack, he would flee, out, anywhere.

Now a child cried, if from fear or pain he could not hear, for under the tumult he had stolen down the staircase and reached the harbor, cast off his painter and rowed out from the land as quickly as he could.

The rock he was in quest of was the easternmost of a little archipelago, which he had never paid attention to before, but now for the first time when in need to be alone, he sought it. A hater of strong body movements, which he found partly superfluous while there existed locomotion by machinery, and partly detrimental to his nerve and thought life for the fine tool which the brain capsule enclosed could just as little stand jars as the house where the astronomer's instruments of precision are kept. He had never learned how to row but his sense of time and his well-weighed motion centers made him at once a clever oarsman, and his studies of physics taught him how to improve the old invention so that by raising the seat he economized arm power.

As he now saw the skerries receding from the stern of his boat he began to breathe easier, and when he shortly landed on the first rock he was seized by an irrepressible feeling of happiness. It was a sunny, long, low islet whose strand rocks of gray gneiss formed a little harbor into which the boat sped. The water near the beach was transparent as condensed limpid air, and the soft color of the kelp shone at the bottom as though molten into a mass of glass. The stones on the beach lay washed, dried and polished, offering a variation in colors that never tired, for there were no two alike, while between them the velvet grass and sedges had sought hold for their tufts. Slowly the ledge rose upward and in depressions in the moss lay the mews' eggs, three by three, coffee brown with black spots, while their owners cried and cawed above his head. He climbed higher up to where a pile of stones had been laid up by marine surveyors, and were whitewashed by the gulls, mews and terns. A few juniper bushes spread out as carpets and beneath them a profusion of the white, subtle star flower had improvised its bed, a connection of Middle Europe's highlands and the shade of northern forests.

The little turnstone daring and gay fluttered uneasily around the disturber of the peace to mislead him from her nest.

Not a shrub, not a tree pointed over the half

naked ledges, and this absence of shadows from coverts, gave the visitor a lighter and gayer mood. Everything was open, overlooked at once, sunlit on this ledge of rock, and the water which separated him from his lately left home among the savages, seemed to surround him with an insurmountable limit of pure transparency. The half arctic, half alpine landscape with its primeval formation refreshed and rested him. When he had become rested, he took the boat and rowed on further. He passed three polished rocks, resembling three petrified waves, naked as a hand, without a trace of organic life and which only aroused a scientific, geological interest concerning their origin; he grazed a flat rock of reddish gneiss; on its lee side stood a hundred years' mountain ash, solitary, moss bedecked, gnarled, and in its ragged trunk a white wagtail hatched its brood for lack of rooftile or stone wall. The little charming bird dove down among the strand stones and would make the foe believe that in no wise there existed a nest or gray white eggs there.

The solitary mountain ash stood on a grassy carpet of a few square feet and looked so lonely, but so unusually strong in lack of competition, and could better defy storm, salt water and cold than with jealous equals wrangling over earth crumbs. He felt attracted to the lonely veteran and longed, during a transitory moment, to raise

a hut at its feet, but he passed on and the feeling blew away.

A dark cliff came to view behind the last point, it was coal black from the volcanic mineral diorite, and, as he approached it, he became depressed. The black crystallized mass seemed to have been cast up from the sea bottom, and after hardening had come into a terrible fight with water or a thundercloud and had cracked into eight parts, which had afterwards been carried away by the sea and ice or dragged down into the depth. Steep, perpendicular stood the black glittering wall out along the little harbor, and when the boat landed below it he felt as though he was down in a coal mine or a sooty blacksmith's shop. It depressed and awed him, he climbed up on the cliff, there rose as a landmark a pole with a white painted keg at the top. This trace of human beings out here where no people were to be seen, was a mixed reminder of gibbet, shipwreck, coal, a crude contrast between the unmixed colorless colors, black and white, of barren violent nature devoid of organic life, there being no lichens or moss on the whole body of the rock; further, this carpentry work without vegetable transition between primeval nature and human hand work, was irritating, disquieting and brutal. In the great Sunday stillness he heard beneath his feet, where stones had rattled down and

formed a roof over a crevice, how the long breakers sucked in half way under the point, and pressed the air forward with muffled sound, then drew back again with a hissing and hollow sighing.

He stood a moment enjoying the oppression, while his thoughts wandered back to old memories which always brought him loathing. He smelt coal gas, saw manufactories, sooty, discontented people, heard machinery, city rumbling and human voices, which spoke words that would eat their way through his ears into his brain and sow seeds that would spring up as weeds smothering his own sowing; transforming the field he had cultivated with so much pains to a wild meadow like those of the others.

He climbed into his boat and turned his back on the gloomy sight; again he enjoyed the infinite purity of the waters, the empty blue which like an unwritten slate lay soothingly before him, for it did not raise any memories, develop any inspirations, or call forth any strong sensations. And now when he approached a larger island, he greeted it as a new acquaintance who should tell him something else and efface the recent impressions. New points and rocks were passed, each offering its surprise, its special physiognomy, often with such small differences that it required a sharply trained eye to see them. These small

cliffs, which seemed so naked, so tiresomely alike when viewed from a passing boat, offered at nearer view the most changeable scenery, just as variance of the same coins only to the numismatist betray their secrets.

He now landed on a somewhat larger islet whose irregular jagged appearance had allured him, especially when he saw protruding over the tops of the rocks the crowns of trees with dense foliage. When he had climbed up on the northern point, the black base of which was polished smooth by the waves, he saw that the island was a cluster of at least four others, that seemed to have been drifted together by different winds, and by the congestion of different geological formations, forming a whole conglomerate of landscape pictures, brought from every zone. The northern part was composed of a cone of hornblende schist which, down on the strand, was cleft in enormous blocks that had fallen from the rocky wall, and was as yet unpolished by the water, while between these cubes grew strangely, as though allured by secret sympathy, an immense number of black currant shrubs, dusky in color and harmonizing in tone with the black sparkling stones. It was so unexpected to find these cultured deserters from the garden out here in the wilderness that it appeared as a joke of nature, perhaps laid in the bill of a wounded black-cock

that had flown out here to die, carrying the seeds of dawning culture. Farther up in the rock pile stood a grove of deciduous trees with light verdure, but with cut tops and white trunks, as though whitewashed with lime by fostering human hand. He tried from a distance to guess their species, but they were so different from all others he had seen in this latitude that his thoughts revolved between acacias, beeches and Japan varnish trees, so common in southern Europe, and when he finally heard the well known rustle of the common aspen he would not believe his ears. He quickly shunned a viper, which ran down between two stones like a stream of water, and coming nearer, he saw that he had heard aright. It was the slender and trim aspen of the groves and pastures, that the northern wind, stony ground, drifting ice and salt water had pruned and trained to this unrecognizable variety, and which in the battle against tempest and cold had turned gray and lost its top, and therefore only consisted of frozen sprouts that were continually shooting out indefatigably renewing themselves, while the goats had peeled off the protecting bark and let the sap run out. There was eternal youth in those soft light green shoots on the gray whiskered branchless trunk, old age without maturity, an abnormality which was refreshing because it was new and transcended the banal.

When he had climbed up between the sharp stones and reached the height it was as if he had ascended a field in ten minutes. The region of deciduous trees lay below him, and upon the plateau appeared already the alpine flora, with the field form of the juniper, and close by the veritable northern cloud berry in the white moss of the moist crevices, and here and there the little civilized cornel, perhaps the only Swedish shrub on the seaboard. He slowly descended the southern slope, through cowberry and bearberry vines, hair grass, sedges, cotton grass and springy mosses, until suddenly he stood on a ravine, where the islet had cracked and formed a channel between the black rocky walls.

With wild shrieks the saucy auks flew up as he stepped on a natural stone bridge across the shallow channel, climbed another cliff of lighter formations, and reached a new section of this wonderful islet.

The light elegant eurite, in which faint rose-colored feldspar was mingled with a delicate blue-green quartz while mica was only betrayed through a glistening like microscopical hoar frost, gave the little landscape a gay aspect, and being cleft infinitely, it offered sofas and real armchairs at every step. A compact vein of granular white limestone passed as a belt straight through the rocky mass, and the fertile gravel from this which

had crumbled from rain and frost, was amassed below between the rocky walls. And here a ravine began to present such an enchanting view that he stopped amazed and sat down on one of the stone stools to enjoy the surprising fairy scenery.

Before him, between the perpendicular walls whose bases disappeared in the soil, there unfolded a grassy carpet interwoven with endless flowers, choicer and more thrifty than those on the mainland. The blood red geranium had stepped from the rock and sought moisture down here, the honey white grass of Parnassus from the wet sedgy mead had here met with the forest's blue yellow lily of the valley, and the southern orchids, perhaps wind driven from the vineland Gothland, had fled here, the hyacinth like orchis-sambucina, the pompous orchis militaris, the stately cephalanthera, a kind of embellished lily of the valley, had sought their nursery here in the forcing lime and moist sea air between protecting walls in the most luxurious grass.

And far in the distance the walls of the cliffs were hidden by birch and alder trees, which rose modestly in the air without daring to raise their tops to the wind; self-sown here and there stood the cranberry trees in the midst of the grassy carpet, with their white snowballs hanging to the grapelike leaf; the dark green buckthorn leaned like an espalier against the precipice and its

glossy leaves faintly reminded of the orange so famed in song, but were more juicy, more varied in color, finer in design and more delicate structure.

It was a park with the characteristics of the mainland floating out here, and when through a rent or depression in the rocks he saw a blue horizontal streak of the sea, the contrast in the wonderful scenery struck him.

After he had sat a moment and listened to the chaffinch's spring time song, which was interrupted by the gulls' and guillemots' caws and shrieks, and he felt the solitude enwrap him like a slumber, and when the birds for a moment were hushed and only the faint sea breeze rustled in the birch tops without reaching farther down, he heard unexpectedly a cough. He started and looked around but saw no trace of man.

The painful hollow sound from the chest of a human being in the midst of this quiet nature awoke him suddenly and brought a disagreeable feeling of loathing. Was it a lonely one like himself who sought rest, or a nest plunderer? In either case he would free himself from uneasiness, and find out who this was that disturbed him. Therefore he climbed the rocky wall on natural steps in the limestone dyke and he beheld now the third section of this polyp-like islet. Over a low stone wall, apparently to protect the blooming

field from grazing cattle, he passed to a pine tree region on gneiss, walked under the branches, trampled knee deep in ferns which formed an underbrush beneath the pine trees and resembled dwarf palms but of fresher green and more elegant foliage, while at their feet were seen the blushing strawberries.

When he came up out of the ravine he saw a cove with rushes where some abandoned pole hooks were driven in the mud. He stopped to listen, and soon he heard a voice which came from the other side of the knoll. It rang high and soft as a child's and sank again so that he thought it was some young yachtsman who had ventured out here. But the words fell so passively, attractively, winningly, and invitingly, and he was surprised to hear a boy expressing himself in so careful language. The vocabulary was small and the language was that of ordinary conservation in cultured society, but without force or diversity of expression, and the objects spoken of were called by incorrect terms. The speaker talked about the verdure of the trees without naming them, called the mews gulls, the chaffinch a bird, gneiss granite and the bulrush a reed.

It might be a youth that insisted upon being heard and spoke so long without allowing himself to be interrupted by the slow mumbling voice of an old man, who every now and then muttered

an objection or information. Now the youthful voice laughed, a laughter without cause, to judge from the conversation, a laughter to let the beautiful voice be heard or show a set of white teeth, a laughter without merriment, a succession of ringing sounds without other meaning than to jealously divert the attention from something real, which would come between. A signal, a bird call! There was no doubt, it was a young woman's voice.

He stepped unresistingly up onto the last knoll after having felt of his necktie and hat, and he now saw beneath him a picture, whose details ever after remained in his memory. On a little upland meadow, under a group of old white beam trees around a white linen damask tablecloth, in the center of which was a butter dish of Kolmord marble, surrounded by the contents of a lunch basket, sat an old lady with beautiful gray hair and a well fitting gown, and close beside her stood a fisherman in his shirt sleeves with a sandwich in his hand, while before him stood a young lady holding in her hand a glass of beer, which she with a merry curtesy and the ripples of a dying laughter on her lips, reached to the embarrassed boatman.

He was captivated at once by the young woman's looks, and although his reflection at once whispered that she coquetted with the churl, he

felt an irresistible attraction in the dark olive complexion, the black eyes, and the stately figure. It certainly was not the first woman which had attracted him at once, but she belonged to that class of women which never failed to attract him to them. The solitude and absence of others was not the reason of the quick selection, because he felt exactly the same as when he sought a color for a necktie and after walking dejectedly from store to store without experiencing the pleasant feeling that the article sought after would give, he finally stopped before a show window where the right one was, and in the same moment felt free from pressure as he quietly said to himself, this is *the one!*

After having hesitated a moment whether to step forward and introduce himself, or turn back, he made a movement which betrayed him. The girl observed him first, her arms fell to her sides and she looked with the expression of a frightened child at the unexpected appearance, which at once gave the intruder courage to step forward and reassure the group with an explanation.

Raising his hat with a low bow he stepped up to them.

CHAPTER FIFTH

HALF an hour later the commissioner sat in the little company's sailboat with his own dory in tow, he was already installed in the position of guide to the two ladies, who had for their health sought a resort for the summer on Fish Skerry and would consequently be his neighbors. The conversation ran agreeably between the three new acquaintances with a somewhat precipitate ardor to compete and show their readiness and best side which is called forth in all who meet for the first time. The one who made the least effort was the elderly lady, who had introduced herself as mother of the young beauty. She seemed to have reached a perfect harmony and resignation, worn off all corners and was living in her memories and semi-indifferently regarding what was going on around her, expecting nothing from others, prepared for everything that life could offer her of good or ill and charming with her even mild disposition.

An affinity had already arisen between the young man and the young woman, and she seemed to enjoy receiving, and he, who had so long waited to give, felt his powers growing now that the long-

accumulated surplus had found an outlet. And he gave for half an hour with lavish hand from all he had stored of information that could be of interest to them who were unacquainted with the conditions which would surround them for awhile. He delineated all the resources of the skerry and its deficiencies, depicted the life very alluringly as it at this moment appeared to him to become, now when he was no longer alone. And the young woman, who had never seen the skerry, received her first actual impression of the same from his description. In imagination she saw the red cottage where she was going to live with her mother, so neat and cosy just as he wished that she would see it in order to feel at home and tarry there. While he spoke it seemed to him as though he received in return something good and strong, as though he heard new thoughts, new points of view spoken by her lips which stood half open, not as though to swallow what he reached her, but as though they spoke themselves, and when her two big, faithful eyes looked admiringly and surprisedly up to him he believed that all he said was true and felt with rising esteem for himself new powers awakened, and old ones growing in strength and tenacity. He felt so really thankful when the boat touched land, just as after having received benefices when in need, that he involuntarily thanked them heartily

as he helped the ladies out of the boat and carried their heavy valises on shore.

The young girl returned the politeness with "not at all," but as though out of her treasures she had really given a trifle compared with what she had in reserve.

When the commissioner had escorted the ladies to their new home which turned out to be Oman's cottage, the young girl broke out into a flow of rapture, being still under the influence of Borg's enchanting description. The dilapidated house had something unusually picturesque in its exterior, for there was not a single straight line. Storms, salt water, frost and rain had destroyed every straight outline, and since the mortar had fallen from the chimney it looked like a big tufa. Still more agreeably surprising was the really home-like interior with its old-fashioned comfort. The two rooms were located one on each side of the hall, with a kitchen between them at the end; the best room was spacious, with dark brown paper, which from smoke and age had assumed a pleasing, quiet, even brown tone with which every color harmonized. The low ceiling, which left no vacant space to be peopled by fancies, showed the beams on which rested the attic floor. Two small windows, with panes about half a foot square discolored by age, allowed a view of the harbor and the sea, and the mass of light from outside was

pleasantly subdued by the white lace curtains which protected against glances from outside without shutting out the daylight, and hung like light summer clouds down over balsam and geraniums in English faïence mugs with Queen Victoria and Lord Nelson in yellow and green. The furniture comprising a big white folding table, a Gustavian bedstead on which were piled numerous eiderdown beds, a white painted wooden sofa, a clock of Mora make that struck the hours, a bureau of birch with its mirror frame veneered with the root of the alder, draped with a bridal veil and loaded with porcelain knickknacks. On the bureau stood a mounted parrot under a glass case, and on the wall hung colored lithographic pictures from the Old Testament, among which the two over the bed seemed to have been placed with questionable purpose, one representing Samson and Delilah in a very unveiled delineation, the other was Joseph and Potiphar's wife. In one corner was an open fireplace which occupied considerable space and would have been dreadful had not the black gap been covered by a white draw curtain.

It was homelike, idyllic and cleanly.

The other chamber was like the first, but had two beds and a commode; the floor was covered with a rag carpet which with its variegated colors formed an album of memories, from grandfather's jacket, grandmother's blouse, mother's cotton

gown and father's pilot uniform. There were the red garters of the girls and the yellow gallows of the land-wehr boys, blue bathing suits of the summer guests, beaver and corduroy, cotton and baize, wool and crash, from all fashions and wardrobes, poor men's and rich men's.

In this room stood a big white cupboard with fancy paintings on the door panels, framed in ivy wreaths painted with mosaic bronze, wonderful small landscapes with dark blue coves, banks of rushes and sailboats, trees of unknown species, from paradise or the carboniferous age, turbulent seas with waves straight as furrows in a potato field, a lighthouse like a column on a rocky ledge; everything as naïve as a child's simple comprehension of rich nature's infinite variety of shapes and colors, which only the highly trained eye can discern.

In all this old-fashioned simplicity lay the essential part of the cure for a tired brain, which would seek rest in the past. The worn movement of the watch would lay unwound awhile and let the spring be relieved of tension to regain its spent powers. The association with the lower classes which did not entice to battle for the morsel of power, but themselves involuntarily every day and hour reminded those of the upper class of their dearly earned position, would diminish the stimulus and quiet those desirous of power by

the thought that there already existed passed by periods.

The commissioner had already prepared the minds of the visitors to see and know all this, and neither of the ladies tired of expressing their satisfaction with the new quarters and were so occupied by investigating the location that they did not observe that their guide had retreated to leave them undisturbed.

. . . . . .

The commissioner sat at his window on this Sunday afternoon and watched the two ladies put things in order down in their cottage. When he followed with his eyes their soft, but irregular movements, it was to him as though he heard music. The same modulations that a series of harmonizing tones develop on the ear drum and communicate to the nerve system, the same mild vibrations were now produced through the eye, and rang through the white strings which stretched from the cranium shell out over the sounding board of the chest and transmitted the vibrations through the foundation of his soul. A feeling of general pleasure streamed through his being, when he saw these women's hands moving in waving lines, as they picked trifles from their trunks and laid them on the table and chairs, the rising and sinking of the hips and shoulders imperceptible to the untrained eye, but still so elastic. And when

the young woman passed through the room, there arose no straight line, no corners or edges when she turned, no angles when she bent over.

He was perfectly captivated in regarding this, so that for a moment he did not notice the noise in the garret and the creaking of the stairs and the raising of latches.

He was deeply occupied regarding the young lady whose exterior seemed to him perfectly beautiful except in one point, which deficiency he would try and accustom his eyes not to see. Her chin was a few lines too big and indicated a lower jaw unnecessarily developed in one who had ceased to catch, hold and tear uncooked meat, and when he saw it in profile he could picture the coming witch physiognomy, when the time came that the old woman's teeth loosened, the lips sunk and formed an obtuse angle and the nose dropped down over the prominent chin. But he must overcome this reminder of a beast of prey, and he pursued her face with his glance and reshaped it in his fancy, forced his eyes when they were fixed upon her face to see it in its entirety.

Now he heard footsteps and shouts down on the hill, and in a wild rage Oman's wife appeared with a swarm of women, who were carrying in triumph the rescued net down to the beach.

He instantly felt his authority infringed on, and

taking his hat went down to the surveyor to demand his help as he was in the Crown's service and in duty bound to assist him.

In the room sat the custom house man at the coffee table, and as usual, when Vestman was out fishing, he had his arm around the waist of his sister-in-law. At the entrance of the commissioner he dropped his hold and under influence of the fear of being discovered he showed a greater officiousness than he otherwise would have done. He put on his uniform cap and went out and in a hasty desire to be a just man he stormed against the women and caught hold of the net.

" Damned old women, don't you know it is penitentiary to break the Crown's lock and seal! "

The women answered in a chorus of imputations, which alluded to both the commissioner and surveyor, the principal ones being that they did not care and that the devil might take the Crown's lock and seal, and that both gentlemen were of such characters that they could be put in penitentiary at any time.

Whereupon the surveyor became enraged and cried to a subordinate to bring the sheriff.

At the word sheriff the people gathered, crawled out of every hole and corner like ants, when one scratches in an ant-hill.

The people seemed ready at once to take part with the women, threatening words were uttered.

The commissioner found it time for him to interfere to avoid coming under a subordinate's protection. Therefore he went up to the crowd and asked what they wanted.

But he received no answer, and turning to the women he spoke to them in a polite but stern manner, saying:

"As I before informed you, the Reichstag or your own elected representatives decided for the sake of your children and descendants that the fishing must be protected through prohibiting the use of such implements as spoil it without bringing you any advantage, and when you have had three years to wear out your old nets, but are still making new ones against the law, I have in the name of the Crown been forced to confiscate the unlawful implements. Nevertheless and in spite of the statute law you have broken the Crown's lock and seal, which can be punished with penitentiary. Still I will use clemency instead of justice if you comply and obey, therefore I ask you for the last time, if you will willingly give back the nets."

To this the women answered with new shriek and a new shower of epithets.

"Well," finished the commissioner, "as I am not a policeman, and you are the multitude, I beg the custom house surveyor to send for the sheriff and his assistants and at the same time I will so-

licit an order from the provincial governor to arrest Oman's wife."

As he spoke the last word, he felt two soft, warm hands grasp his right hand, and two big childish eyes looked into his, while a falling voice like that of a mother who begged for the life of her child, said:

"In the name of Heaven have compassion on a poor unhappy woman and don't do her any ill;" it was the supplication of the young girl who had at the beginning of the scene come out of the cottage.

The commissioner would free himself and turned away from the big eyes, whose glance he could not endure, but he felt his hand clasped harder and finally pressed against a soft bosom, heard words in melting tones, and, completely vanquished, he whispered to the beauty, "Let me go and I will drop the whole affair."

The girl loosened her hold, and the commissioner who made his plan in half a minute caught the surveyor by his arm and led him up to the custom house cottage, just as though he would give him some orders. When they reached the door, the commissioner said shortly and decisively as though he had come to a new conclusion.

"I shall communicate with the provincial governor myself in writing. However, I thank you for your assistance."

Thereupon he went up to his room.

When he was alone and had collected his thoughts, he was obliged to acknowledge that his last act had been dictated by lower motives, as his sexual impulses had prevailed to such a high degree that he had been fooled into an act contrary to the law, for one could not speak of pity for people who were comparatively well off, as they were owners of houses, fishing grounds, boats and implements valued at many hundreds of dollars, also owners of seal rookeries and bird islets, and, besides, paid taxes on capital and a few small places that they rented out. The false idea that a woman had vanquished him, however, did not hold a place in his thoughts, for he knew very well, conscious as he was in all points that he had fallen by his own propensity or interest to gain something from this woman. But before the throng of people his authority was ended, his reputation shaken and hereafter there would not be an old woman or a boy but felt themselves above him. This, to be sure, might be immaterial for it made no difference to him whether he had power or not over these poor wretches. What seemed worse to him was that this woman whom he now felt he must be bound to in order to be happy, should from the first moment inure herself in the belief that she had gained a conquest of him and thus

the equilibrium in a future union would be disturbed.

He had had many fancies for and engagements with women before, but his distinct consciousness of man's superiority over the intermediate form between man and child, which is called woman, had made it impossible for him to conceal it long, and therefore his engagements had had but short duration. He would be loved by a woman, who should look up to him as the stronger, he would be the adored, not the adorer, he would be the main trunk on which the frail shoot should be grafted, but he was born at a period which was full of spiritual pestilence, when womankind was devastated by an epidemic mania for greatness, produced by degenerated, sickly men, and by political pygmies, who were in need of the masses to vote. Therefore he had been obliged to live alone. Well he knew that in love, man must give, must let himself be fooled and that the only way to approach a woman was on all fours. And he had crawled at intervals, and as long as he crawled everything had gone well, but when he had finally straightened up, that was the end of it, always with a multitude of reproaches that he had been false, that he had dissembled submission, that he had never loved, and so on.

Moreover, as a possessor of the highest intel-

lectual enjoyments, and feeling himself an exceptional being, he had not harbored a lively desire after the lower affections, never desired to be the supporter of a parasite, never longed to feed competitors, and his stronger self had rebelled against being the instrument of propagation for a woman's lineage, the rôle he had seen most men of his age play.

But now he stood in just such a dilemma again, to assimilate a woman by allowing himself to be assimilated. To dissemble or let his exterior express what he did not feel, he could not, but he had a great ability for adapting himself to his associations, and comprehending other people's way of thinking and suffering, for he had never found in the lives of others anything but past stages that he himself had lived through, and consequently he had only to draw from memory or experience, letting go his hold, and diminishing the tension onward. He had always found pleasure in woman's company as a rest and diversion on exactly the same ground and from the same reason that keeping company with children makes one grow younger and is a strengthening amusement, when it is not continued too long or becomes an effort.

Now he had felt the desire growing in him to own this woman, but notwithstanding he was an investigator and knew that man was a mammal,

it was perfectly clear to him that human love had developed as everything else, and has taken up the elements of a higher spiritual quality without leaving the sensual foundation. He knew precisely how much of unsound heavenliness sneaked in with the reaction of Christianity against the purely brutish, should be eliminated, and he did not believe in a primness which conceded matters that could not be shown, just as little as he admitted that the only purpose of the conjugal state was the bedfellowship. He wished for an intimate, complete union as to body and soul, where he as the stronger acid would neutralize the passive base, but not as in chemistry form a new neutral body, but, on the contrary, would leave a surplus of free acid, which would always give the union its character and lie in readiness to neutralize any attempt of the combination to liberate itself, for human love was not a chemical union, but a physical and organic, which resembled the former in certain respects without being identical with the same. He did not expect any augmentation of his own self, no addition to his strength, only an increase of his vitality, and instead of searching for a support he offered himself as a support to learn his strength and feel the enjoyment of measuring out his power, strewing with open hands his soul without being weakened thereby or made destitute.

During these thoughts he glanced out of the window and saw at once what he sought, for the young girl was standing on the door stoop receiving hand shakings from women and men, patting the children on their heads and seemed overcome by feelings, which so much public sympathy had aroused.

"What a peculiar sympathy for criminals," thought the commissioner; "what a love for the mentally poor! And how well they understood each other's propensities, which they boasted of as feelings and which they believed to be something more than clear, mature thoughts."

The whole scene was such a tangle of absurdities, that it could not be cleared, reflecting the chaotic in the first weak attempt at reasoning, by these brains and spinal cords.

There stood she who had fooled him into violating the law, and received worship like an angel. Even now if his violation of the law was from their point of view a fine noble action, then he who gave pardon instead of justice ought to have the thanks. The opinion of the horde was that he should not, for they well knew that the motive for his action was not kindness towards them, but perhaps tender feelings for a young girl, gallantry, or the hope of winning her. Yes, but the motive for her appearance might then be to gain the good will of the crowd, to become beloved and popular,

and receive hand shakes; the horde here played the same rôle as the society of the ballroom, the promenaders on the street or in the square. And she had fooled him through personal contact, innocently, perhaps, possibly with calculations, probably half of each, to commit a weak action, for which she was worshiped.

But now he must win her, therefore he pocketed all of his reflections; he saw in an instant that through this medium he could pass his ideas and schemes down to the horde, that through this conductor he could move the masses and force upon them his benefactions, make them his vassals, and that he could afterwards sit and smile like a God at their foolishness, when they believed that they themselves had created their happiness, but were only pregnant with his thoughts, his schemes, were eating the dregs from his great brewage, the strong malt drink which would never reach their lips. For what did he care if these deserted skerries supported a half starving, superfluous population or not. What compassion could he feel for his natural enemies who represented the inert mass, that had lain smothering his life, impeding his growth, who were themselves lacking in every trace of pity for each other, and who with the fury of wild beasts persecuted their benefactors whose only revenge was new benedictions.

It would be his great and strong enjoyment to sit unobserved, regarded as an idiot, and guide these peoples' fates, while they believed that they had subdued him, cut off his connections, tied his hands. He would strike them with blindness, pervert the vision of the fools, that they should believe themselves to be his superiors and he their servant.

While these thoughts gathered and grew into a strong decision, there was a knock at the door, and at the Commissioner's "come in," the surveyor appeared to deliver an invitation to tea from the ladies.

The commissioner accepted it, and sent his thanks.

After he had arranged his toilet and thought over what to say and what not to say, he went down.

On the porch he was met by Miss Mary, who with an excessive warmth took his hands and pressed them, saying with emotion:

"Thanks for what you did for the poor woman! It was noble, it was grand!"

"No, madam, it was neither," replied the commissioner hastily; "for on my side it was a bad action which I regret and it was dictated only from politeness to you."

"You malign yourself from pure politeness, and I should appreciate much more a little sincer-

ity," replied the lady, and at the same moment the mother appeared.

"Oh! You are a good child," interrupted the mother in a tone of the most immovable conviction, and bade the commissioner step into the best room where tea was ready to serve.

To avoid engaging in an endless conversation he went in. He saw at a glance how the plain furniture of the fisherman's cottage had been mixed with remnants of worn city luxury. On the bureau had been placed alabaster vases yellowish from age, photographs in the windows between the flowers; on one side of the fireplace stood an arm chair with figured cretonne and brass tacks, a few books on a center table round a parlor lamp.

It was neatly arranged, but with a careful mathematical exactness, everything symmetrical but still a little awry and askance where it was intended to be straight. The tea set of old Saxony china with gold edges and cherry red monograms was cracked here and there and the teapot cover had been mended with clasps. After he had studied the portrait of the deceased father of the family without daring to ask what position he had held, he saw that he had been a government official, and he understood that here was *pauvres honteux.* In further looking around the room, he noticed a knapsack left under a table and bearing

a tag which indicated that the old lady was the widow of a councilor of the exchequer.

At first the conversation touched the objects that presented themselves to the eyes, and then passed on to the event of the day, coming finally to the people. The commissioner saw at once that the ladies were interested in the affairs of other people and lived in a morbid uneasiness for the welfare of the lower classes. As he had observed that his sincerity had offended and the purpose of his visit was not to hurt their feelings by giving them his ideas, he laid to and let himself drift. Sometimes his resentment was aroused and he would venture a little remark or information, but he felt at once as though soft hands were placed on his mouth, and round arms wound about his neck, so that the words were smothered. Besides, the views here were so rooted, everything so fixed, and all questions settled, that they only smiled in a friendly way, with mild forbearings, when they read a doubt in him regarding their axioms. Then the conversation turned to the moral and spiritual condition of the population, and here the commissioner perfectly agreed with them. He delineated with fervor the rudeness of the forenoon with its drunkenness and fray, pitying the want of enlightenment, and finally narrating scenes which betrayed complete paganism. He spoke of how the fishermen cast offerings on

stones, loaded their guns with lead from church windows, how they talked about Thor's bucks when it thundered, and of Oden's wild hunt when the gray geese came in the spring, and how those on the inner islands let the magpies destroy the chickens for the people did not dare to tear down the nests from fear of unknown avengers.

"Yes," completed the old lady, "it isn't their fault, and if they were not so far from the church, it would be entirely different."

Thither the commissioner's thoughts had not gone, but in an instant he saw what a great power he would get as an ally, and developing the seed of thought he had got in the morning from observing the divine service on board the navy steamer, he burst out with real rapture:

"Well, but one can build a meeting house at small cost. Just think of it, if I should address a letter to the Home Mission Institute."

The ladies embraced the subject with the greatest ardor and promised themselves to write to that institution and some societies and projected a fair, but recollected that here was no dancing public.

The commissioner removed all difficulties by offering to advance the money and provide the building, which could be bought ready made at the factory, if the ladies would only find a preacher. "Yet," added he, "one ought to se-

lect for this place now at the beginning, one of the stern kind, who can lay hold of the people and produce a revival movement of the most earnest nature, for no half measures will do here."

The ladies made mild objections and recommended charitable means, but the commissioner showed, how fear was the elementary foundation on which to build a first education; afterwards one could come with love.

A great common interest had welded these souls together, while they overheated themselves at the great fire of love, and worked themselves up to an overflowing omni-benevolence towards every living thing, pressed each other's hands and separated with blessings and congratulations that fate had brought together three good people, who would work unanimously for the good of humanity.

When the commissioner came out, he shook himself, as though to clear off some dust, and felt as when he had visited a flour mill, and taken delight in seeing all objects coated with the soft, white tone of flour, which harmonized iron, wood, linen and glass in one accord, and the same feeling of subdued pleasure as in touching locks, banisters and sacks powdered with a soft dust of flour, but had at the same time found it hard to breathe, obliged to cough and to take out a handkerchief.

Nevertheless it had been a pleasant evening. This imperceptible radiation of warmth from the mother which thawed the frigid thoughts, this atmosphere of cordiality and childishness in the young woman, which made him grow young again, this childish belief in that which in his youth was the naïve idea of the day to lift up that which was cast down, to protect what was dwarfed, sick and frail, all of which he now knew was directly against everything that could promote humanity's happiness and increase, and which he hated from instinct, when he saw how all strength, every burst of originality was persecuted by the unfortunate. And now he would form an alliance with them against himself, work to his own destruction, lower himself to their level, dissemble feeling for the enemy, bestow the war cash on the antagonists. The thought of the enjoyment these proofs of power would give intoxicated him, and he turned his footsteps towards the beach that in the solitude he might recall himself. And when he now in the still, mild summer night wandered on the sand, where he recognized his own footsteps from previous days, where he knew every stone and could tell where this or that herb grew, he noticed that everything looked differently, had assumed a new form and gave entirely different impressions than when he had walked there the day before. A change had occurred, something

new had intervened. He could no longer evolve the great feeling of solitude, where he had felt as though alone before nature and humanity, for somebody stood at his side or behind him. The isolation was abolished, and he was soldered to the little banal life, threads had been spun round his soul, considerations began to bind his thoughts, and the cowardly fear of harboring other thoughts than those his friends harbored clutched him. To build happiness on a false foundation he dared not, for if he had it all hewn even to the ridge pole it might sometime tumble, and then the fall would be greater, the grief deeper, and still it must come to pass if he would own her, and that he would do with all the mighty power of a mature man. Lift her up to him? But how to do it? Not that he could make her from woman to man, or redeem her from the uncurable propensities her sex had given her. Not that he could give her his own education which had taken him thirty years to acquire, nor could he give her the same evolution he had passed through, the experiences and the knowledge he had battled for and won. Therefore he must sink down to her, but the thought of this sinking tormented him as the greatest possible evil, as sinking, going down, beginning over again, which besides was impossible. It only remained for him to make himself double, split himself in two, create a personality,

intelligible and easy of access to her, play the duped lover, learn to admire her inferiority, get used to a rôle as she liked to have it, and so in silence live the other half of his life in secret and to himself, sleep with one eye and keep the other open.

He had mounted the skerry without observing it. And now he saw the lights down in the fishing village and heard wild shrieks, the cries of jubilee over the beaten foe, who would raise their children and their children's children from poverty, save them labor, give them new enjoyments. Once again there awoke in him the desire to see these savages tamed, to see these worshipers of Thor kneeling for the white Christ, the giants falling before the pale Asas. The barbarian must pass through Christianity as a purgatory, learn veneration for the power of the spirit in the frail bundles of muscles, the remainder of the wandering tribes must have their middle age before they can reach the renaissance of thinking and revolution of action.

Here should the chapel be raised on the highest ridge of the skerry and its little spire point upwards over the look-out and flag pole to greet the sailors at long distance as a reminder of . . . Here he stopped and reflected. With a look of scorn on his pale face, he bent over and picked up four gneiss scales, which he laid in a rectangle

from east to west, after having measured thirty steps in length and twenty in breadth.

"What an excellent landmark for the sailors!" he thought as he descended the hill and went home to bed.

CHAPTER SIXTH

THE commissioner had confined himself to his room two days to work, and when on the morning of the third day he went out for a stroll on the beach, he met by chance the widow of the deceased officer of the exchequer. She had an anxious look, and when the commissioner inquired after her daughter's health, he learned that she was indisposed.

"It is lack of entertainment," said he at random.

"Yes, but what shall one do in this solitude?" responded the anxious mother.

"The lady must go out to sea, fishing and yachting and get exercise," prescribed he without thinking of what he said.

"Oh, yes," continued the mother; "but my poor Mary cannot go alone."

As there was only one reply, he answered:

"If it would please the ladies to have my company I shall be glad to be of service to you."

The mother found him very good and accepted the offer, saying that she would at once tell Mary to dress.

The commissioner went down to the harbor to outfit the boat, and on the way his steps began to falter, as though going down hill, where the weight pushed him faster than he would go. He felt reluctant at having been so suddenly put in motion by an outside power, before he had had time for deliberation, and now he would make resistance but could not. It was too late and he let himself drift, conscious that nevertheless he would always tend the rudder and determine the course.

He had hoisted the jib on his Bleking boat, shipped the rudder and loosened the bowline ready to be cast off, when Mademoiselle and her mother appeared on the beach. The girl was dressed in an ultra-marine blue gown with white trimmings and wore a blue scotch woolen cap which was very becoming and gave her something of a boyish, brisk expression, totally unlike the angelic one she had shown a few days before.

As the commissioner greeted her and asked after her health, he offered his hand to help them on board. The girl took the outstretched hand and with a light bound was in the boat, where she was placed in the stern at the tiller, but when afterwards the same hand was reached to the mother, she explained that she could not accompany them as she must prepare the dinner. The commissioner, who was suddenly surprised, felt

again the desire to make resistance against this soft power which led him where he would not go, but was kept from doing so by the fear of seeming ill-bred; so after a short regret that he must spare the agreeable company of the mother, he threw off the bowline and commanding Miss Mary to throw over the tiller, he put the main sheet in her hand and hoisted the sail.

"But I cannot manage a boat," cried the girl; "I have never had my hand on a tiller!"

"It is no art! Do only as I tell you and you will at once be able to navigate a boat," replied the commissioner as he placed himself in front of the girl and helped her with the maneuvering.

A light soft breeze was blowing and the boat glided out of the harbor with the wind abeam.

The commissioner held the jib sheet and began by instructing the beautiful navigator, grasping every now and then her wrists and pressing the tiller to windward, until they were clear of land, had speedway and were lying on the tack they were to keep to until they reached the skerries.

The responsibility, the effort and the feeling of controlling the boat which held two lives, awoke the numb powers in the woman's frail form, and her eyes which attentively followed the position of the sails were glowing with courage and reliance, when she saw how the boat obeyed the slightest pressure of the hand. If she committed

a fault, he corrected it with a kind word, gave her courage to continue by praising her watchfulness, removed difficulties through explaining the whole proceeding as something that clears itself.

She was radiant with happiness, and commenced to talk of the past, of her thirty-four years of life, how she had believed life and the desire of living was past, how she felt herself young again, how she had always dreamed of a life of activity, of manly activity above all else, and to devote her powers to humanity, to others. She knew that she as a woman was a pariah . . .

The commissioner listened to the whole as to well-known secrets, formulas of an absurd struggle to make that equal which nature had made purposely as unequal as possible, to spare humanity labor, but to answer this now he regarded as without reward and he stuck to his rôle as an appreciative listener, allowing her to give vent to her diseased imaginations which the fresh wind would blow away. Instead of taking out a knife and cutting off the tangled skeins which her confused thoughts offered to him, he would simply pretend not to notice them, but tuck them under and through gathering impressions which he purposely developed, wind on the old tangles and use them as bobbins, which should only serve as an underlayer for the new yarn, spun out from his rich distaff.

In haste he improvised a scheme, how using the material which the skerries afforded for object lessons, he would in living pictures, without her observing it, in a few hours let her pass through sensations which she should believe came from without, and in such a manner he would smuggle his soul's net over her, and tune her strings in harmony to his instrument. With a movement of the head he now signified that the boat should tack, he slacked the sheet a little, and the boat cleared land and dashed out on the open sea. The wide horizon, the infinite sea of light where no object intervened, threw a light over her beautiful face, the small lineaments were as magnified, half perceptible wrinkles were smoothed out, the whole expression assumed the character of freedom from daily cares, paltry thoughts, and the eye that in one moment could overlook such a big part of the earth's body seemed to see on a grand scale, so that the little self swelled and felt its relative power, and when now the long sea waves slowly raised and lowered the boat in powerful rhythm, he saw how transport was mixed with a grain of fear, which kept it in check.

The commissioner, who observed that the grand scenery did not fail in its impression, concluded now to place the text under the frail music of the swells of the senses, and guide her dawning thoughts out on the great highway, he would

loosen the tegument on the swelling seed, so that the plantlet would push out.

"It has the effect of a planet!" improvised he. "The earth, the banal, the tiresome, the moldy, becomes a celestial body. Do we not feel as though we were already participants of heaven, when the opposition is dissolved, the false opposition between heaven and earth, which are one, like the part and the whole. Don't you observe how you grow instead of shrink when you outwit the wind and make it take you to the right when it wants to go to the left? Don't you feel what great power is within you, as you ride upon a wave, when it with a thousand pounds of weight would press you down into its depth? He, who is supposed to have created the wings of the birds, and who needed fifty thousand years to make a flyer out of a creeper, was less quick than he who for the first time put canvas on a pole and instantly invented navigation.

"Is it then so strange if man created God out of his own image, conceiving from his ingenuity one still more ingenious?"

The girl having listened attentively to his effusion, regarded his face uninterruptedly as if she had turned her own towards a fire to warm it. The unusual words she heard seemed to have sunk into her mind and acted as a leaven. Benumbed, lulled by the soft, persuading intonation,

she received without deliberation the new views he gave to her previously lifeless and monotonous landscape, of the origin of life and its meaning, and without seeing that her own religious conviction was buried before dissolution, she took up the new and piled it upon the old.

"I never before heard anyone speak as you do," she said dreamily; "speak more!"

He kept silent and with a new motion he gave the boat another course.

They approached Svartbodan's sinister volcanic formation. The black sparkling diorite with its death-white landmark, called "the white mare," looked still more strikingly awful in the sun's rays, which in vain tried to lighten the extreme tones of its black and white.

A cloud passed over the girl's face, her expression shrunk, the eyebrows contracted in rolls as though they would drop down and shut out the depressing picture. A visible movement on the tiller signified that she would fall off from the skerry, but he gave the boat its course forwards, and with the wind's compressed power sped it into the ravine between the black cliffs where the sighing waves sucked it forwards.

It became silent in the boat, and the commissioner would not try to guess at the gloomy recollection that awoke in his companion, but limited himself to pointing to the bleached white skeleton

of a long tailed duck, which was still left on the black ledge.

And the wind took the sails again, filled them and wafted the boat out onto the open sea.

They passed the rock with its single mountain ash and its wagtail and approached Sword Island where he for the first time had seen her. There they landed and he guided her the same way that he had passed that Sunday morning, and let her receive the same impressions that he had felt, led her down into the blooming field and showed her where, looking between the wild buckthorns, he had seen her for the first time.

She was now in a wanton mood because all these small observations, even the details of the circumstances, had remained in his memory and must signify that he was smitten. She laughed when he spoke of the first time he had heard her cough, and in a playful humor she told him to go down to the same place and speak and she would guess who it was that spoke.

He obeyed, and jumping down from the rocky footstool placed himself behind the white beam trees and imitated the bellowing of a bull.

"Nay, how beautiful he can sing," joked the girl. "It is surely a Hottentot actor."

The commissioner, who found pleasure in her childishness and had not played with children for many years, continued the rôle and stepping out

on the green field with his coat turned inside out and the lorgnette hanging on one ear, he improvised a savage dance accompanied by a song that he had heard Hottentots sing in the Jardin d'Acclimatation.

The girl seemed both surprised and amused.

"Do you know," said she, "I much prefer you like that when I see that you can be human for a moment and put aside that philosophical face?"

"Is a Hottentot then more of a human being in your eyes than a philosopher?" let fall the commissioner, but at once regretting that he had aroused her to consciousness, he broke a branch from the white beam tree, and wove a wreath and gave it to the girl who had become sober when she saw she had betrayed herself by committing such extreme stupidity.

"Now you shall wreathe the victim, Miss Mary," said the commissioner as a cover. "I wish instead of one I were a hundred and permitted to go as a hecatomb to the slaughter for you."

Kneeling he received the wreath from the pacified beauty, whereupon he started on a run towards the beach with the girl after him.

Down at the water's edge they stopped.

"Shall we throw skipping stones?" proposed she.

"If you please," answered he and selected a flat stone.

They threw stones out over the water a few moments until they became warm.

"Shall we take a bath?" suddenly exclaimed the girl, as if she had for a long time hatched the thought which must now come out.

The commissioner did not know where he was, whether it was a joke or a project coming in earnest, with the mental reservation of keeping on part of the clothing, or for one of the parties to withdraw.

"You take a bath and I will go on farther," he found this the only thing to answer.

"Don't you bathe then?" asked the girl.

"No, I have no bathing suit with me," answered the commissioner; "and besides, I do not bathe in cold water."

"Ha, ha, ha!" rang a cold, disagreeable, scornful laugh from the girl's throat. "You, afraid of cold water," sneered she; "perhaps you cannot swim?"

"Cold water is too coarse for my fine nerves. If you will take a cold bath here I will go to the northern point and take a warm one."

The girl had already pushed off her shoes and throwing a look of disdain and injured vanity at him, she said:

"I suppose you cannot see me from there?"

"Not unless you swim out too far," answered the commissioner and went away.

When he had reached the northern slope of the islet, he searched for a cleft in the rock, which was protected from the northern wind by a rocky wall agout fifty feet high. The black hornblende gneiss was as polished as agate by the waves and curved in frail delicate rolls which resembled the muscles of the human body and clung to the bare feet soft as a bolster. No breath of wind reached here, and the sun had burned six hours against the dark ledge so that the air was heated several degrees above body temperature, and the stones almost burned beneath his feet. He had been down to the boat and brought an ax with which he now cut off the driest heath and sand oats and made up a blazing fire on the rock; in the meantime he undressed. When the fire had quickly burned out he swept the ledge clean as a baker's oven, and with a bailer poured the crystal sea water over the heated stones and let the vapors lap his nude body. Then he placed himself in one of the arm chairs which the sea had sculptured from the cliffs, wrapped a blanket round him and with his knees crouched under his chin shut his eyes and seemed to fall asleep. But he did not sleep; he used this method as he called it to wind himself up and for a few moments let his brain rest and resume its elasticity. For it was too

much of an affort to fit himself into companionship with the confused thoughts of others. His mechanism of thought suffered by contact with others, so that it wavered and became unreliable as the compass needle in the presence of iron. Each time he would think clearly about something or form a conclusion, he placed his soul in harmonious numbness by a warm bath, extinguished consciousness in a half slumber for a brief moment by not thinking, during which time all the received observation material seemed to become melted, and afterwards when he extinguished the fire and awoke himself to consciousness the alloy welled up.

When he had sat a moment and the sun had warmed him through, he suddenly arose and stood as though awakened after having slept a whole night. His thoughts labored again, and he looked happy, just as though he had solved a problem.

"She is thirty-four years," he thought; "this I had forgotten under the impression of her youthful beauty, therefore this chaos of past stages, these parts of rôles she has successively played in life, this mass of shifting reflexes from men that she had tried to win and fit herself to. Now lately she must have been wrecked in some love affair. *He,* who had held together all these rag pieces of a soul, had turned aside, the sack had rent and now the whole thing lay as a pile of rag-

picker's rubbish. She had shown sample pieces of the romantic parsonage of 1850 with a regurgitation from the beginning of the century for saving humanity, zealous faith from 'The Dove's Voice,' and 'The Pietist's' streams of conjuncture, cynicisms from George Sand and the androgynal period. To search the bottom of this sieve through which so many soups had passed, to solve the enigma which was not one, he was too prudent to spend time on. Here only remained to pick out of the heap of bones that which was suitable to form the skeleton, which he would afterwards cover with living flesh and blow his breath into. But this she must not observe for then she would not permit it. She must never see how she was held by him for that would only raise hate and resistance. He would grow underneath the ground as the rhizome, and graft her on himself that she would shoot up, show herself to the world and bear the flower which humanity should admire."

Now he heard the mews cry and understood that she had swam out from shore. Therefore he dressed quickly and after he had gathered up his belongings he took from under the sheets of the boat material for a small breakfast and laid it out on the moss under an arborescent pine which resembled an Italian stone pine.

There was not a great variety, but everything

was costly, choice and served on the remnants of a collection of porcelain which he at one time had begun to gather. The butter shone egg yellow in a serpentine dish with screw cover that stood in a fragment of Henry II faïence filled with ice, the crackers lay on a lattice-braided dish of Marieberg and the sardels were on a saucer of blue mottled Nevers. Fear of the general banality breaking forth in arts, industry and daily life, had urged the owner to the modern search after the unusual, the dreadful triviality of the present age and its hate of originality had forced him like so many others into superrefinement to try to save his personality from being ground among the bowlders in the big glacial flow. His finely developed senses did not search after frugal beauty in shape and color, which so easily grows old; he would see history and memories of exploits from the world in that which surrounded him. This fragment of Henry II faïence, with its cream white pipe-clay incrusted with red, black and yellow, aroused memories of the beautiful Loire landscape with its renaissance castles, while its ornamental bookbinding style reminded of Madame Hélène de Genlis and her librarian, who together with a potter pressed out a style, purely personal, which still could not escape the coloring of the century of chivalry, when beauty in life was venerated and even the trade was subordinate to

science and art, realizing the advantageousness of a system of intellectual rank.

When he had spread breakfast and looked at his work it was to him as though he had placed a piece of culture up here in this semi-arctic wilderness, sardels from Brittany, chestnuts from Andalusia, caviare from Volga, cheese from the Gruyère alps, wurst from Thuringia, crackers from Britain and oranges from Asia Minor. There was a flask in basket work of Chianti wine from Tuscany to be served in goblets with Frederick I's monogram in gold. All were topsy-turvy without a savor of collector or museum; there were slight touches of color thrown in here and there, like flowers pressed as souvenirs between the leaves of a guide book but not in a herbarium.

Now hearing the voice of the girl cry from her bathing place a halloo, he answered, and immediately she stepped out of the shrubs, straight, brisk and radiating with health and the joy of living. When she saw the breakfast spread she raised her cap jokingly with a bow, impressed against her will by the aristocratic in the arrangement.

"You are a wizard," said she; "permit me to bow!"

"Not for so little," answered the commissioner.

"Yes, you indicate that you can do more, but to rule nature as you lately chattered about, that

will be beyond you," opposed the girl in a superior motherly tone.

"My lady! I did not express myself so categorically; I only reminded you that we have partly learned how to subdue the powers of nature, by which we are partly controlled — observe the little important word partly — and that it is in our power to both change a landscape's character and the whole soul life of its inhabitants."

"Good! Conjure up an Italian landscape, with marble cottages and stone pines, out of this dreadful granite *paysage!*"

"I am certainly no juggler, but if you challenge me I promise you by your birthday, in three weeks to transform this fresh piece of nature, whose equal you may search after through all Europe, to a treeless, scorched cabbage landscape to your taste."

"Well! Let us wager! And if after three weeks I lose, what then?"

"Then I win — but what?"

"We will see then!"

"We will see! But will you attend to my duty during that time?"

"Your duty! What is that? To lie on the sofa and smoke cigarettes?"

"Yes, if you can as I attend to my duty on the sofa,— with pleasure. But you cannot do that and now you shall learn the reason and meaning

of my stay on this skerry! But first take a glass of wine with your wurst!"

He poured a glass of the dark red Chianti wine and passed it to the girl who emptied it at a draught.

"You know," began the commissioner, "that my official commission here at this fishing port is to teach the population how to fish."

"It must be a nice one, you who brag that you have never had a tackle in your hand."

"Don't interrupt me — I shall not teach them how to fish with tackle. You see, things are thus, that these lingerers are conservative as all rabble —"

"What language is this?" interrupted the girl again.

"Plain language! However! From indiscretion and conservatism these aboriginals go on undermining their own interests as fish eating mammals, and therefore the state must place them under guardians. The stromling — God bless the fish! — that constitutes the most important livelihood of these autochthones, threatens to come to an end. Certainly I don't care at all, if a few hundred ichthyophageus more or less increase or diminish a superfluous horde of people, it is completely immaterial. But now they shall live since the Acadamy of Agriculture wishes it, and therefore I shall hinder them from fishing

their scanty supply. Is this acknowledged logic?"

"It is inhuman, but you are made of material for a hangman!"

"For this reason I have on my own accord, without asking for the decoration of Vasa or any kind of thanks, found out a new means of sustenance which shall replace the old, for even if the stromling should shoal for half a man's age after the fishermen have emigrated, still this means of sustenance is threatened by a competition, which after a hundred years of rest has again arisen more formidable than ever. Do you know that the herring will return to the coast of Bohus in the fall?"

"No, I haven't had any letter from them for a long time!"

"They do so at any rate. Therefore we must stop the stromling fishing and fish for salmon instead."

"Salmon? In the depth of the sea?"

"Yes! It shall be found there, although I haven't seen it. Yet you shall find it out!"

"But if it isn't there?"

"I told you that it was there! You shall only catch the first one and then salmon fishing is open."

"But how do you know salmon exists when you haven't seen it?" argued the girl.

"By a mass of investigations too complicated to explain in conversation, partly done at sea . . ."

"Only once!"

"I work as quickly as twenty, thanks to my superior intelligence — partly on my sofa but mostly in books. Anyway, will you insist to destroy the people, first with salmon and afterwards with a mission house which you have forgotten?"

"You are a demon, a devil!" exclaimed the girl between scorn and earnestness.

The commissioner, who only from a caprice had turned into skepticism, and now saw that just this made the most impression, found it best to continue this rôle.

"Surely you do not believe in God?" asked the girl with an air, as though she would eternally despise him if he answered in the negative.

"No, I do not."

"And you would be an Ansgarius and introduce Christianity on the skerry?"

"And the salmon! Yes, I will be a demoniac Ansgarius! But will you also let down the salmon trawl and be blessed by the revisors of the Reichstag?"

"Yes, I shall work for these people whom I believe in, I shall devote my feeble powers for the oppressed, and I shall show you that you are a blasé, a roué and a scorner . . . No, you are not,

but you make yourself out worse than you are for you are a good child anyway, I saw that last Sunday . . ."

She said a good child, as if with a sure calculation that he would snap at the bait, and place himself under her care as the child, no matter whether a good or bad one. But now he had already formed a fancy for the demon as being superior and more interesting, therefore he held to the more grateful task. Surely he knew from experience that the easiest way to insinuate oneself into a woman's favor was to let her play the mother with all the freedom changed to intimacy, but it was a worn-out play and could so easily lead to an inextirpable hectoring on her part. Better then to give her the more grateful part of a redeemer, where nothing that was absolutely superior entered, only the mother of God's intervening purpose, where she was mediator between two equally strong powers.

But the transition was not easily found, and in a moment of loathing at the whole play, which was still necessary if he would win her, and that he would, he pretended to go down and see if the boat was safely moored, as a breeze was beginning to blow.

Upon reaching the beach he drew a long breath as though he had been exerting himself beyond his strength. He unbuttoned his vest as though

he had been wearing a coat of iron, and cooling his head he threw a longing glance out over the free water. Now he would have given much to have been alone, to shake off the chaff which had fallen upon his soul during his contact with a lower spirit. In this moment he hated her, would be free from her, own himself again, but it was too late! Cobwebs had fastened to his face, soft as silk, slimy, invisible and impossible to remove. At the same time — when he turned back and saw her as she sat peeling a chestnut with her long fingers and sharp teeth — he was reminded of a mandrill he had seen in a menagerie, and was seized with an infinite compassion, and a wave of sadness, such as the more fortunate feels when he looks upon the lowly. He immediately thought of her delight at seeing him as a Hottentot, and became vexed again, but calming himself with the self-possession of a man of the world he approached her, and to speak the first cloaked word he reminded her that it was time to go, as the wind had risen. However she had observed the tired and absent-minded look upon his face and with a sharpness, which completely calmed his feeling for an instant, she responded:

"You are tired of my company! Let us go."

When he did not answer with a courtesy, she resumed with feeling, which it was difficult to judge whether real or pretended.

"Excuse me, I am naughty! I have grown so, and I am ungrateful! Never mind it!"

She wiped her eyes and began with a housewife's trained care to put the dishes together.

And now, when she bowed down, leaning over the remainder of the unwashed dishes with the tablecloth tied round her waist for an apron and started to carry the service to the beach to wash it, he hastened to relieve her of the load, urged by an irresistible desire not to see her in a servant's place, and feeling the sting of being served by one whom he would raise far above himself at the same time she was to look up to him as one that had granted her the power over him.

At this pretended combat that arose over which one should serve the other, the girl dropped the dishes. She gave a cry, but when she looked at the pieces, her face cleared up.

"Fortunately they were all old! My God, I was so frightened!"

He suppressed his paltry thoughts of the loss by at once placing himself on the side of her who had had the misfortune, and glad to have a noisy ending to the various feelings that rent him, he threw the shivers of porcelain like skipping stones out over the bay and rounded off the pointed situation with a jocose,

"Now we do not need to wash dishes, Miss Mary!"

Whereupon he reached her his hand and helped her into the boat, which was already pulling at the painter under the increasing dash of the waves.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

A BRIGHT, sunny summer morning the commissioner is sitting with his pupil up in the wooden pavilion, which he has had set up on the highest point of the skerry close to the newly laid foundation of the mission house. Down in the harbor lies a schooner, from which the frame for the new building is being unloaded and carried up to its place to be joined together by the foreman and his laborers. Therefore it has been unusually lively on the skerry for some time and small skirmishes have already arisen between the fishermen and the city workmen, in which the latter have treated the former with insolence, which has given rise to a series of feasts of atonement followed by drunkenness and new frays, attacks of immorality and appropriation of other's property. Therefore the commissioner and the elderly lady have a momentary regret at having undertaken the civilization of these people, when the first steps already showed such a sad result; so much more so as the nightly noises, singing, crying and complaining disturbed all work and all rest for them, who had come out here solely for the pur-

pose of seeking quiet. The commissioner, who had lost all reputation by once yielding a little of his authority, could not restore the peace, but Miss Mary on the other hand succeeded better and understood how by a prompt appearance, and a good word now and then, to suppress the storm. This she would not impute to her beauty and agreeable manner; she had credited herself with a higher degree of strength and understanding than she possessed, and thus imbued herself in the belief of having an unusual faculty of mind, so that even now, when she sat as a pupil with her teacher, she received his instruction as though she were already acquainted with them, and answered with remarks more pointed than sagacious, seeming to correct and explain rather than to learn.

The mother, who was sitting beside her embroidering an altar cloth for the new mission house, seemed occasionally amazed at her daughter's penetrating insight and great knowledge, as she with a simple question nonplussed her teacher.

"See here, Miss Mary," lectured the commissioner, always deceiving himself with the hope of being able to educate her; "the untrained eye has a propensity to see everything simple; the untrained ear to hear everything simple. You see here around you only gray granite, and the painter and the poet see the same. Therefore they paint and depict everything so monotonously; therefore

they find the skerries so monotonous. And yet, look at this geological map of the surroundings and then throw a glance out over the landscape. We are sitting on the red gneiss region. Look at this stone you call granite, how rich is the variety; it is the baking together of the black mica, the white quartz and the pinkish feldspar."

He had taken a sample from the pile which the foundation layers had blasted from the skerry and laid in a heap for the building's foundation.

"And look, here is another. It is called eurite! See what fine shades of color, from salmon red towards flint blue. And here is white marble of primeval limestone."

"Is there marble here?" asked the girl, her imagination stirred at the mention of this valuable stone.

"Yes, there exists marble here, although it looks gray on the surface without being gray. For, if you observe it closer you will find what an infinite variety of color there is in the lichens. What a scale of the finest colors from the ramaline lichen India-ink black to the crottle's ash-gray, the ground liverwort's leather-brown, the parmelia lichen seal-green, the tree lungwort's spotted copper-green and the wall moss egg-yellow. Look closer out over the skerries as they are now lit by the sun, you will see that the rocks have different colors, and that the people who are used to seeing

them, even give them names after the scale of colors, which they are acquainted with without knowing it. Do you see that the Black Rock is darker than the others, because it consists of the dark hornblende; that the Red Rock is red, because it is composed of red gneiss, and the white skerries of clean washed eurite? Is it not more to know why, than to know that a thing is so; and still less to see nothing but an even gray, as the painter, who paints all the skerries with a mixing of black and white? Hear now the roaring of the waves, as the poets summarily call this symphony of sound. Close your eyes for a moment and you will hear better while I analyze this harmony in simple notes. You at first hear a buzzing which resembles the noise heard in a machine shop or a big city. It is the masses of water dashing against each other; next you hear a hissing; it is the lighter, smaller water particles which are lashed to foam. And now a grating as of a knife against a grindstone; it is the wave tearing against the sand. And now a rattling like the dumping of a load of gravel; it is the sea heaving up small stones. Then a muffled thud as when you clap the hollow of your hand to the ear, it is the wave which presses the air before it into a cavern; and lastly this murmuring as from distant thunder, it is big bowlders, rolling on the stony bottom."

"Yes, but this is to spoil nature for us!" said the girl.

"It is to make nature intimate with us! It gives me composure to know it, and thereby frees me from the poet's half-hidden fear of the unknown, which is nothing else than memories from the time of savage fiction, when explanations were sought but could not be found quickly; and in the emergency the fable of the mermaids and the giants was caught at. But now we pass on to the fishing, which shall be retrieved, leaving the salmon for some other time, and try new methods for stromling fishing. In two months the great fishing begins, and if I have not calculated wrongly it is going to be a failure in the autumn."

"How can you foretell that from your sofa?" asked the girl more cuttingly than inquisitive.

"I foretell it by the facts that I have seen — from my sofa — how the drifting ice in the spring scraped the shoals clear of kelp and other algæ, in which the stromling go to spawn. I foretell it by the scientific fact that the small crustaceans — no matter what they are called — on which the stromling feed, have stayed away from the banks since the seaweed was scraped away. What shall we do then? We shall try to fish in the deep water! If the fish don't come to me then I must go to the fish. And therefore we shall try with nets drifting after a floating boat. It is simple!"

"It is grand!" said Miss Mary.

"It is old," protested the commissioner, "and it isn't my discovery! But now we shall as prudent beings think of a last resort, for even if we get stromling and don't get a price for it on account of herring being caught again on the west coast, we must have something else in readiness."

"It is the salmon?"

"It is the salmon, which must be found here, but I haven't seen it."

"You have told me this much before, but now I should like to know how you can know it."

"I shall reduce the fraction and in a few words tell the reason of my stay here. The salmon wander as do the other migrating birds."

"The salmon a bird?"

"Certainly, a perfect migratory bird. It is to be found near the rivers of Norrland, and has been caught twice in nets round the islands of the north passage. It has been taken near Gotland and in the whole southward passage; therefore it must pass by here. Now it is your task to trace it out with floating tralls. Have you the desire to do it, in the capacity of my assistant, to obtain my salary?"

The last word came suddenly, but with calculation, and did not fail in its intent.

"I shall make money, mamma," cried Miss Mary in a playful tone, intended to hide the joy

she really felt. "But," added she, "what will you do then?"

"I shall lie on my sofa, and spoil nature for you."

"What are you going to do?" asked the mother, who believed she had not heard aright.

"I shall make an Italian landscape for Miss Mary," answered the commissioner, "and now I will leave you, my ladies, and make the sketch."

Therewith he arose and making a polite bow walked down to the beach.

"He is an odd being," said the mother, when the commissioner was out of hearing.

"An unusual being at the least," answered the girl; "but I don't believe he is perfectly sane. He seems to have principles, and on the whole is a kind man. What have you to say about him?"

"Hand me my yarn, child," said the mother.

"No, but say something . . . tell me whether you like him or not," continued the girl.

The mother only answered with a half sad and half resigned glance, which expressed indifference.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile the commissioner had gone down to the harbor and taken his boat to row out among the skerries. The summer heat had lasted out here a month, so that the air was hot; but drifting ice still coming from the north, where an unusually severe winter on the coast had caused bottom

freezing, was now drifting southward, cooling the water, so that the lower air strata had greater density than the upper ones. The consequent refraction disfigured the aspect of the skerries and had caused the most magnificent mirages during the past few days. This scenery had given rise to long continued disputes between the commissioner and the ladies in which the fishing population had been summoned as judges, being the most competent because they had seen these phenomena of nature from childhood. And when on a morning the light red gneiss skerries through refraction stretched upwards and by the varying density in the strata of air seemed stratified as the cliffs of Normandy, Miss Mary argued that it really was those limestone cliffs, which were reflected as far up as the Baltic Sea, through a law of nature still unsolved by science. At the same time the white swell of the breakers in the strand stones was magnified and multiplied through refraction so that it really looked as though a flotilla of Normandy fishing boats were beating the wind under the cliffs. The commissioner, who had tried in vain to give the only correct explanation, in order to take away the supernatural, the more so as the people saw in the phenomena predictions, of course, of coming misfortunes; belief in ill luck, which acted as a damper on their enterprise, now found himself obliged to appear first

as a wizard to win the ear of the populace, with the intention, however, to subsequently remove the mystery by telling them how he made his magic.

Therefore he asked the believers, whether they would also believe themselves to see a mirage of Italy, if they should see an Italian landscape, and when they answered, "Yes," he decided to combine the useful with the pleasant and by a few small changes fulfil his promise to form an exotic landscape for Miss Mary's birthday, so that by the next mirage it would loom up against the horizon on a grand scale when seen through the colossal magnifying glass, that the different density of the air strata afforded.

Sitting in his boat, he aimed towards the Sword-islet with his diopter, the lenses of which he had considerably increased in power. Now the first question was how to get the most characteristic features of the formation, viz., the stratified rocks, to come forth, and this nature had partly done. After this he needed a stone pine, a cypress, a marble palace and a terrace with oranges on espaliers.

After scanning and outlining the skerry, he had the scheme clear and soon landed with his boat in which was stowed a crow bar, a ship scraper, a roll of zinc wire and a bucket of yellow ocher with a big tar brush, besides an ax, a saw, nails and a stock of dynamite cartridges.

When he had landed and packed up his belongings, he felt himself a Robinson Crusoe, who had taken up a battle with nature, but much sharper and surer of victory as he had brought along the means of culture. After he had placed the plane table on a tripod and upon this the alidade, he started to work.

The mountain ridge, whose tilted folds happily imitated the southern sedimentary strata, needed only to be scraped so as to remove the lichens, where there were any, leaving some horizontal stripes darker than the folds. It was not heavy work; the ship scraper glided over the smooth surface as a retouching brush on the scene painter's big canvas.

Sometimes he felt with disgust that he was throwing time and power away on childish things, but the bodily exertion sent the blood to his head, so that he saw small things bigger than they were; felt something of a Titan, who stormed the universe, corrected our Maker's mistakes, and wriggled the earth's axis so that the south came a little northward.

After he had striped the rocky wall, for a few meters, which was all that was needed as it was to be multiplied by the air strata, he went to manufacture the stone pine. On the hillock's crest stood a group of low arborescent pines, which together only miraged as the border of a

forest. The thing was to cut down half a dozen trees to isolate the best one which would be silhouetted against the sky.

To saw down the supernumerary trees was the work of half an hour. The one that was left was slender with all its vegetative energy gathered at the top, because the others standing so close had hindered the formation of branches on the trunk. But now he must thin the crown with an ax so that the characteristic umbrella frame with its ribs came out. It was easily done, but when he afterwards looked at his creation with the diopter he still saw that the style was not perfect and that the top branches must be stretched upwards with zinc wire and the side branches somewhat downwards and outwards. When the stone pine was completed, he took a glass of wine and selected the material for the cypresses. This soon presented itself in the form of a pair of pointed junipers, which he only needed to select so that they rose against the sky, and trim them with an ax and the knife. But as they were somewhat too light, he took a pail of water and stirred some ivory-black in it and sprinkled them with the wash until they had a perfect churchyard green.

When he contemplated his work, he became dejected, and recollected a dark story of the girl who stepped on the loaf of bread; and when the white mews gave forth dreadful cries above his

head, he thought of the two black ravens which came from heaven to take her soul down to hell.

After he had sat a moment and the blood had returned to his brain, he smiled at his work and at his childish fear. If nature herself had not gone exactly so hastily to work with the origin of species it was not lack of good will, only lack of ability.

Now to make a marble palace; and as that had been his starting point and he had planned it all at home on his sofa, this work was not more difficult than the other.

The limestone ledge stood perfectly vertical, ready for a façade; true there were only a few square meters of it but no more was needed, and it was only to loosen the eurite slabs, which from weathering had cracked from the limestone. The crowbar proved sufficient at first, but at the base he found it necessary to use a dynamite cartridge in the crack.

At the report of the cartridge and the raining down of shivers he felt something of the poet's longing to dump all at once the ammunition of the standing armies into a volcano and relieve humanity of the pain of existence and the trouble of development.

Now the marble slab was cleared and the crystals of the limestone sparkled like loaf sugar in the sunbeams. With his paint buckets he marked

out a rustic base and outlined two small quadrangular windows. On the rocky ledge above he drove two poles and laid a third one across, tying them so that the whole formed a pergola. Afterwards he needed only to lift up the bearberry vines, which were a couple of yards long, and twine them round the poles; thus the grapevine was in place, and hanging down in festoons.

At last he retouched the soil with a gallon of muriatic acid diluted with as much water, whereby a brilliant variegation of colors was produced on the grassy carpet, to represent patches of Bellis or Galanthus which flowers he had found characteristic of the Roman Campagna at the coming of the "second spring" in October after the wine harvest has ended.

And therewith his work was completed!

But it had taken him until evening. In order that the miracle should have a proper effect there remained, however, to announce its appearance in advance and best if he could predetermine the day. He knew that there had been great heat in the south of Europe, and therefore it would not be long before a north wind would come. It had been from the east for some time now, while the barometric pressure in the North Sea had been low. According to reports, drifting ice lay off Arholma, and as soon as the wind would veer a few points to northward the ice drift must follow

the current which passes to the west of Aland, where the Gulf of Bothnia empties into the Baltic Sea. If he could only get a north wind in the evening of some day then he was sure it would last a couple of days, and as it is always accompanied by clear air he would be able to foretell the appearance of the phenomenon at least one day in advance, and if he got that far it would be an easy matter to tell the hour, for the mirage only appeared a few hours after sunrise, usually between ten and twelve o'clock.

As he entered his chamber, he locked the door to devote himself to his work, his great work, which he had been planning for the last ten years and expected to complete when he was fifty; this was the goal, which had inspired his life and which he carried as his secret. He enjoyed the thought of owning himself for a few hours, for during the weeks which had passed since the arrival of the two ladies, he had been occupied every evening with keeping them company, and that, which should have been a rest and a pleasure, had become a constraint, a labor. He loved the young girl and would live with her in wedlock, in complete unification, when leisure moments would afford unpremeditated confidences and rest; but this state of semi-familiarity where he at fixed hours must appear whether he was disposed to converse or not, pained him as a duty. She had

caught hold of him and never tired of receiving as he possessed the ability to be always new and entertaining; but he who never received anything, could in time find the need of renewing himself. But when he then stayed away, she became uneasy, nervous and tortured him with questions whether she was too importunate, to which he as a well-bred man could not answer in the affirmative.

Now he opened his manuscript case, where the cartons lay arranged with notes, small slips of paper with improvised thoughts on observations, stuck on half sheets as in a herbarium, and which it amused him to arrange and rearrange after new classifications in order to find out whether the phenomena could be arranged in as many ways as the brain willed, or they really could be arranged according to only one classification, viz., as nature had placed them, if indeed nature in its operations had followed any particular law and order. This occupation awakened in him the idea that he was the real arranger of chaos, who separated light from darkness; and that the chaos first ceased with the evolution of the discriminating organ of self-consciousness, at a time when light and darkness in reality were not yet separated. He intoxicated himself with this thought, felt how his ego was growing, how the brain cells germinated, burst their capsules, multiplied and formed new species of concepts, which should in time crop out in

thoughts, and fall into the brain substance of others as yeast plants and cause millions after his death, if not before, to serve as hot beds for his seeds of thought . . .

There was a knock at the door, and with an excited voice, as though he had been disturbed in a secret meeting, he asked who it was.

It was a greeting from the ladies and an inquiry if the commissioner would come down.

This he answered by returning his regards, but he had no time this evening because he must work, unless some urgent circumstances required his presence.

There was silence for a moment. As he thought he surely knew what would follow he left his interrupted work and placed his manuscript in order; he had just completed this when he heard the mother's step on the staircase. Instead of waiting for her to knock he opened the door and greeted her with the question, "Miss Mary is sick?"

The mother started, but recovered herself at once and asked the doctor to come down and see her as it was impossible to get a physician.

The commissioner was not a physician but he had acquired the elements of pathology and therapeutics; had observed himself and all the sick that had come within his circle; had philosophized over the nature of diseases and their remedies, and

finally, made up a therapy, that he applied to himself. Therefore he promised to come in about half an hour and bring the medicine with him as he heard the girl lay in convulsions.

It certainly was not difficult for him to guess the nature of her sickness. As the first messenger had said nothing about illness, it must have occurred between the two messages and had been caused by his refusal to go. It was a psychical indisposition, which he so well recognized and which passed under the yet undefined name of hysteria. A little pressure on the will, a thwarted wish, a cross plan, and at once followed a general depression under which the soul tried to place the pains within the body without being able to localize them. He had so often seen in the pharmacodynamics beside the names of remedies and their action small cautious remarks as "acts in a yet unexplained way," or "action not yet fully known," and he believed that he had found by observation and speculation, that just because of the unity of mind and matter the remedy acted both chemico-dynamically and psychically at the same time. Recent medical ideas had left out the medicine or the material basis and assumed in hypnotism a purely psychical, or in diet and physical exercise a vulgar and often detrimental mechanical method. These exaggerations he regarded as necessary and beneficial transition forms, although

their trial had demanded its victims as, for instance, when one with cold water excites a nervous person instead of soothing them with warm baths, or tired out the weak with violent exercises in the raw air.

He believed he had found that the old remedies could still be of service as a kind of instruction material, to use the popular expression, in order to awaken and change impressions, and just as the group of astringents really cause a contracting of the stomach, just so do they cause a concentrating of the soul's scattered powers, which the dissipated drinker knows from experience when he in the morning winds up his run down movement with an " Angostura."

This woman felt herself bodily indisposed without directly being so. Therefore he now composed a series of remedies, of which the first would cause a real physical ailment whereby the patient should be urged to leave the sickly condition of the soul and localize it definitely in the body. To this purpose he took from his family medicine case the most nauseating of all drugs, asafœtida, which could best develop a condition of general illness, and in such great doses that actual convulsions would result; that means, the whole physique with the senses of smell and taste should rise in revolt against this strange substance in the body, and all the functions of the soul should

direct their attention to its removal. Thereby the imaginary pains would be forgotten, and it would only remain then to cause in succession transitions from the one nauseating sensation down through less unpleasant ones, until finally the release from the last stage, by means of an upward grade of cooling, covering, softening, mitigating remedies, should awaken a complete sensation of vivacity as after having passed through troubles and dangers, which are delightful to recollect.

After having dressed himself in a white sack coat of cashmere and tied on a cream colored necktie with pale amethyst stripes, he for the first time since the arrival of the ladies put on his bracelet. Why all this he could not explain, but he did it under the influence of an impression, brought from the sick bed he was to visit, and which he produced in himself. And when he looked in the mirror without observing his face, he noticed that his exterior gave a mild sympathetic impression, but also with a touch of the unusual and that it would attract attention, without exciting a nervous person.

After this he collected his requisites like a magician who is going to perform, and went to the sick bed.

When he was shown into the chamber, he saw the girl lying on the sofa, with disheveled hair and dressed in a Persian morning-gown. Her

eyes were unnaturally big and stared contemptuously at the intruder.

The commissioner felt for a moment embarrassed, but only for a moment, and then he stepped forwards and grasped her hand.

"How is it with you, Miss Mary?" asked he sympathetically.

She looked at him piercingly, as though she would penetrate him, but did not answer.

He took out his watch and, counting her pulse, said:

"You have fever."

Here he lied, but he must gain her confidence, that was part of the cure.

The expression on the girl's face changed immediately.

"If I have fever! Oh, I believe I shall burn up!"

She was allowed to complain, and the hostile mood against the visitor had passed so that contact closing the current could occur.

"Do you promise to obey my orders? If so, I will cure you," the commissioner began, meantime laying his hand on her forehead.

At the word obey he felt how the patient twitched as though she would not obey at all, but at the same moment his bracelet slipped below the cuff and the resistance of the imaginary sick ceased.

"Do with me as you please," answered she submissively; meanwhile her eyes were fastened on the golden serpent which fascinated her and aroused her fears of something unknown.

"I am no physician by profession, as you know, but I have studied the art, and know all that is necessary for this occasion. Here I have a drug which is very diagreeable to take, but is infallible in its action. It is no secret and I shall tell you what I am giving you. This is a resinous gum which is prepared from the root of a perennial herb which grows in stony Arabia."

At the word Arabia the girl listened, for it probably aroused some thoughts of incense, which could not hide Lady Macbeth's foul crimes.

Therefore she took the spoon and smelt of its contents; but at the same moment she threw her head backwards and cried:

"I cannot take it!"

He placed his arm round her neck, firmly and gently, and reached the spoon to her once more and coaxingly said:

"Show now that you are a good child!"

Thereupon he poured the drug into her mouth, before she could make resistance.

She fell backwards upon the sofa pillows and her body writhed under the pains and nauseating effects which the resin with its smell of white onion

had produced, and her face expressed a horror as though all things bad and disgusting in this world had piled upon her. With a supplicating voice she beseeched him for a glass of water to free her from her agony.

This he would not give her; she must lie down and, whether she would or not, submit to the disagreeable feelings the remedy caused.

Now when he saw her melted by disgust, he took up his drug number two.

"Now, Miss Mary, the wandering in stony Arabia's desert is ended and you shall go up on the Alps and inhale the mountain air, concentrated in the vigorous gentian's bitter root, yellow as sunlight," said the commissioner in an encouraging, manly voice.

The girl received the bitter drug unresistingly and shrank as though stabbed with a knife; but directly after she aroused as though her scattered powers had rushed together and her energy had returned. The violent remedy had taken away the previous obnoxious taste but irritated the mucous membranes of the stomach by its sharpness, and increased the pulse.

"Now we shall put out the fire with quilts," continued the commissioner. "And let us go to Brittany's seashore to fetch balsam in the mild Carrageen alga. Do you feel how soft the muci-

lage lays itself protectingly over the irritated lining of the stomach and do you notice the odor of the sea salts?"

A quiet calm spread over the patient's heated face, and as the physician now considered her strong enough to listen to him, he began with reminiscences of the coast of Brittany, the yachting on the Atlantic, the life with the fishermen in Quimper, and the hunting for seabirds at Sarzeau.

She followed his narrative, but still seemed somewhat tired, so he broke off and gave her a symphony, as he called it, which was composed of the classical route, well known as the wine spice of bridal parties in the Middle Ages; the heavenly Angelica, the spearmint with its household odor and a little touch of *Carbenia benedicta* to preserve vigor, and a grain of juniper oil to tell of the forest.

It was as though he rubbed her with impressions, snatched her away from sickly thoughts by letting her travel in fancy from place to place; make the tour of the whole old and new world, get visions of all kinds of landscapes, all races of people, all climates. When she seemed tired he gave her a spoonful of lemon juice with a little sugar, which cooled and eased her, so that after a dreadful half-hour passed she received this simple refreshment as a great enjoyment, that made her smile.

"Turn now towards the wall," said the commissioner, "and pretend to sleep for five minutes while I go out and speak to your mother."

The commissioner, who felt his powers failing, was obliged to go out into the fresh air to recover. And now he need only to throw a glance out over the half lighted evening sky, out over the steel blue sea, shut his eyes and try not to think, to feel, how the disordered brain regained its place again and continued its accelerating motion forwards, after having been turned backwards awhile.

While he stood thus with his arms on his chest, half asleep, he heard a thought still buzzing in one ear: a child of thirty-four years!

Thus he awoke and went into the cottage again.

Miss Mary was sitting on the sofa with her hair loosened and thrown gracefully around her, but otherwise looked perfectly well and cheerful.

The commissioner took from his basket a bottle of Syracuse wine and a package of Russian cigarettes.

"Now you shall pretend you are well," said he, "and that we have met after a long journey, upon which you shall drink a glass of sweet Sicilian wine and smoke a cigarette, for it is part of the cure."

The girl seemed to make an effort to hide her

secret suffering, and drank the wine while she kept her eyes on the bracelet.

The commissioner broke the silence with, "You look at my bracelet?"

"No, I did not," denied the girl.

"I got it from a woman who of course is dead, as I have not returned it."

"Have you been in love?" asked the girl with a strong doubt.

"Yes, but with open eyes! When one usually considers it commendable to use sense, why quench it when one is going to take one of the most important steps in life?"

"So, one should be calculating in love?"

"Strongly, incredibly calculating when it is to let loose one of the wildest propensities!"

"Propensities?"

"Propensities! Yes!"

"You don't believe in love?"

"You propose questions which have no answer! Believe in love in general? What do you mean by that? There exists a mass of species of love, as much contrasted as black and white! I cannot believe in two of them at the same time, or all of them at once."

"And the highest species?"

"The intellectual; in three stories but as the English house. Above is the study, beneath the sleeping room and in the basement the kitchen."

"So practical! But love, a great love, is not calculating, that I have imagined as the highest, as a storm, a lightning stroke, a cataract!"

"As a rude, uncurbed power of nature? So it appears to the animals and the lower varieties of human beings . . ."

"Lower? Are not all human beings alike?"

"Oh, yes! All beings are alike as two berries, youths and old men, men and women, Hottentots and Frenchmen, certainly they are alike! Look at us two only! Perfectly alike, the only difference is that I have a beard! Pardon, my lady, now I see that you have recovered I will leave you. A pleasant sleep!"

He had arisen and taken his hat, but the next moment the girl stood at his side with both his hands clasped in hers and with the same glances with which she for the first time had vanquished him, she begged him to stay!

Under these burning glances and hand pressures he felt something as he thought a young girl might feel when she stood under the influence of a seducer's passionate attack. He became perturbed and inwardly there arose a feeling of violated bashfulness, and injured manliness. He freed his hands, drew himself back and said in a calm voice, cutting in its affected coldness:

"Consider!"

"Stay, or I shall seek you in your room!"

rang the excited voice of the girl, which seemed to imply a threat from which there was no appeal.

"Then I shall lock my door!"

"Are you a man, you?" rang the challenge with a hard laugh.

"Yes, in such a high degree that I will be both the selecter and attacker, and I do not like to be seduced!"

With this he went out and heard behind him a noise as from a human body falling and striking against furniture.

After he was out he felt like turning back, for through mental strain he was in a condition of weakness that made him susceptible to impressions of the sufferings of others. But after having been alone for a few seconds and collected himself, so that his powers returned, he firmly decided to break this engagement, which threatened to usurp his whole soul-life; and in time cut off all relation with a woman, who had showed so plainly that it was only his body she desired, while she ejected his soul, which he would pour into this lifeless image of flesh. She enjoyed the sound of his voice, but the thoughts she did not receive only in such cases as when they were of direct benefit. He had often caught her looking at the lines of his figure, and she used sometimes thoughtlessly to grasp his arm whose swelling muscles formed a ridge beneath the soft cloth. He re-

membered now these many overtures at the bath, on yachting; on going up to the lookout, which he never visited because it upset his nerve system to stand on a bluff without sufficient support. And now this evening, when he had seen this eruption of uncontrollable passion, he saw with fear that this woman was not of the developed race, which could individualize its love to a certain one, and that he to her only played the rôle of the indispensable opposite sex in general.

He had strolled down to the strand for a breeze, but the night was sultry. The sea had ceased to roll, and in the northwest the heaven was a faint melon color, while out in the east over the water rested the night. The strand cliffs were still warm, and he placed himself down on one of the many arm chairs, that the cold had blasted out and the waves had polished smooth.

The events he had just lived through passed before him, and now, when his senses were cooled off, he saw them in another light. His dream had always been that he should awaken a woman's love to such a degree that she should come begging, crawling to him, saying, "I love you, deign to love me!" Such was the order of nature, that the weaker approach the stronger with a submissive mind and not vice versa, although the latter still was the case with those who were living

with a trace of superstitious ideas about something supernaturally exalted in woman, notwithstanding that investigation had made it manifest that the mysterious was only confusion and the exalted only a collection of poems by the suppressed desires of male propensity.

Now she had come as he had dreamed it, the woman of the new time free from prejudice, had shown all her inward incandescent nature, and he had recoiled! Why? Perhaps tradition and conventional habits still governed him! For there was nothing bold in her effusion, no trace of the harlot offering, no immodest behavior or impudent mien! She loved him in her way. What more could he desire, and with such a love he could safely bind himself to her, for perhaps not many men could boast of having lighted such a flame. But he felt no pride over having gained her, for he felt his own value, and rather a pressing responsibility which he would get rid of; and therefore he must depart from the island.

In thought now he sat and packed his belongings. He gathered the things from the writing table and saw the green empty spread, took away the lamp that shed light in the evening and sparkled colors in the daytime, and there was a vacuum. Stripped the walls of their pictures and draperies, and the white, sad, mathematical figure came forth. He took the books from their

shelves, and the dreadful solitude faced him, monotony, nudeness, poverty!

And then came the fatigue from bodily efforts, fear of traveling and its tiring effects; anxiety of the unknown where he now might be cast, deprived of his accustomed surroundings and her company. And he saw the young girl in her childish but still majestic beauty; heard her complain, saw her whitened cheeks, which another would cause to blush again as time passed.

Thus he suffered all the pangs of separation through a whole quarter of an hour, which had seemed to him as long as hours, when in the dusk of the summer night, he saw a woman's figure up on the rock outlined against the light sky. The splendid contours, that he knew so well, assumed still nobler proportions against the now pale yellow sky, which could just as well be the end of a sunset as the beginning of sunrise. She seemed to have come from the custom house cottage, and to be searching for someone. Bareheaded and with her hair still hanging over her shoulders, turning her head to spy, she seemed suddenly to discover what she sought, and with brisk steps she hurried down to the beach where the object of her search was sitting, immovable, without the power to flee, without the will to proclaim himself. And when she reached him she fell down and laid her head in his lap and talked wildly,

modestly, beseechingly, as though she was annihilated with shame without being able to hold her tongue in check.

"Don't go away," sobbed she. "Despise me, but have mercy! Love me, love me or I will go where I shall never return!"

There now awoke in him the mature man's intense longing for love. And when he saw the woman at his feet, it aroused the inherent chivalry of man, who would see in its mate the mistress not the slave; and he arose, lifted her up, placed his arm round her waist and pressed her to him.

"At my side, Mary, not at my feet," said he. "You love me, for you knew that I loved you, and now you belong to me for life. And you will never leave me alive, do you hear! For our whole life long. And now I place you on my throne and give you the power over me and my belongings, my name and my property, my honor and my actions, but if you forget that it is I who gave you the power, and if you misuse or give it away, then as a tyrant I will overthrow you to such a depth that you shall never see the sunlight more! But you cannot do it, for you love me, is it not true that you love me?"

He had placed her on the stone stool, and kneeling he laid his head in her bosom.

"I lay my head in your lap," continued he, "but do not cut off my hair meanwhile I sleep

on your bosom. Let me uplift you but do not drag me down. Become better than I am, for you can when I protect you from contact with the world's corruption and misery, in which I must delve. Ennoble yourself with great faculties which I do not possess, so that we together shall become a perfect whole."

His feelings began to take the cooler tone of reason and seemed to quench her exaltation, so that she interrupted him by placing her glowing face to his, and when he did not answer her caress, she pressed a burning kiss on his lips.

"You child," said she, "don't you dare to kiss when nobody can see it?"

Then he sprang up, clasped her round the neck and kissed her throat repeatedly until she freed herself from him with a laugh and stood erect before him.

"You are a perfect little savage," scolded she.

"The savage is there, be careful!" answered he, and grasping her round the waist they wandered onwards on the warm sands which whispered round their feet.

And now the lighthouse in the distance blinked, as the air had cooled off and the dew had fallen. Out from the rookeries they heard the cries of the seals as from the shipwrecked.

They wandered an hour or more, and spoke of their first meeting, about their secret thoughts

from time to time; about the future, about the coming winter; about traveling in foreign countries; meantime they came out on the point where the pile of stones with a cross was selected in memory of a shipwreck with loss of life.

Suddenly they caught a glimpse of two shadows that sneaked away and disappeared.

"It is Vestman and his sister-in-law," said Borg. "Fie! If I were her husband I would sink her!"

"Not him?" came from the girl more hastily than she intended.

"He is not married!" answered Borg shortly; "that is the difference!"

There was a silence, a disagreeable silence, such as makes one seek for a topic for conversation; and meantime whispered the thoughts, now untied from the enchantment: and he already longed for the enchantment again, for the intoxication, which blinded him, which turned gray to rose color, which built pedestals; which placed gilded edges on cracked china.

At this they turned from the rocky wall to go home. The wind which had been quite asleep, now began to waft against them and in his anxiety the awakened lover felt how freshly it blew. It was the north wind which he had waited for, and which he now greeted as a rescuer. For in a second when the girl's contradiction in a serious

matter had just as though broken something in him, so that he felt that her being could only be soldered to his, not melted together with it, unless he gave up resisting and delivered himself to her wholly and fully, he now grasped the opportunity to raise himself again without treading upon her.

"Why do the people hate me?" asked he suddenly.

"Because you are superior to them," slipped from the girl without her observing the confession she made.

"I do not believe it," answered he, "for their intellect is not sufficient to value my superiority."

"Their hate can pervert their vision!"

"Superbly answered! But if they should see the miracle, would their eyes open?"

"Perhaps! If the wonder aroused fear."

"Well, they shall have the miracle! To-morrow at ten o'clock it will appear!"

"What?"

"That which I have promised you!"

The girl looked into his face with amazement as though she did not believe what he said. After which she laughingly interposed:

"If it should be cloudy weather then?"

"But it won't be," answered the commissioner with decision. "However, now we have already come so far as to speak about weather, we can

even think of what your mother will say about us."

"She won't trouble herself about it," answered the girl at once.

"It is astonishing that a mother does not pay any attention to what man her daughter is to bind herself in relationship, and whose name she is to carry! Can that be immaterial to her?"

"Good night, now!" interrupted Miss Mary and reached her mouth for a kiss. "To-morrow morning you will come and visit us! Is it not so?"

"Certainly," answered he, "certainly!"

She walked away.

But he still stood on the same place and saw her slender figure rise against the now sulphur yellow sky as she stepped upwards on the hillock, and when she came to the highest point she turned back and threw a kiss to him, and then she seemed to sink behind the slope until he only saw her head with its loose hair which fluttered in the northern wind.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

WHEN the commissioner sat the following morning at breakfast with his betrothed, after having been received without comment as the future son-in-law, he felt again the combined impression of a great calm at having been received in a little circle, where common interests formed a tie to unbounded confidence; and at the same time an anxiety over the necessity of giving himself up for these manifold considerations which sympathy and relationship bring. The past evening had rushed into his life mixing great and small, as life offers it, his whole history of love, which he had dreamed of with open eyes, had passed with his eyes purposely blindfolded. He had closed his eyes to the girl's pretended or imaginary illness; closed them completely, so that he had deceived himself into taking it seriously; for if he had not done so, and instead had said plainly from the first moment: rise up and be well, you are only sick in imagination, then she would have hated him for life; and his aim was to win her love. Now he had gained her love, perhaps because she believed that she had deluded him;

therefore his love stood in direct relation to his credulity; and when now in the morning he repeated to himself again and again the question: Do you believe in your Mary? his rested reason translated it thus: Am I sure I can delude you? No, there does not exist a love with open eyes; and to gain a woman by frankness is impossible; to approach her with raised head, and with plain words is to drive her away. He had begun with lies and must go on with dissembling. However, now while the conversation drifted between trifling things and effusive expressions of feelings, it gave no time for worry, and the pleasure of being in a home between two women made everything so bright and soft, that he delivered himself up to the enjoyment of being the petted one, the child, the little one, the son of the mother-in-law; and he did not observe that the daughter, who had already outgrown her mother, treating her as though she the mother was her child, by simple syllogism gradually took authority over him, who called her equal "mother-in-law." It amused him, this reversing of nature's order, and he had always before him the image of the giant, who let the children pull out three hairs from his beard, but only three. As they were sitting at their coffee and chatting, there was heard a murmuring from the people down on the beach.

From the window they saw them gathered on the landings, sometimes standing immovable, with hands shading their eyes: sometimes rocking on both feet, as though the ground was burning beneath them, or as if they could not stand still from fear.

"It is the miracle!" cried the girl, and hastened out accompanied by her mother and her betrothed.

Coming out on the slope the ladies stopped as though struck by fright, when on this clear sunny morning, they saw a corpse-white colossal moon rising above a graveyard with black cypress, floating on the sea.

The commissioner, who had not calculated the effect at this point of view, did not see quickly enough the relation of things, and stood deathly pale from the shock which follows something monstrous and unexpected in the otherwise law-bound nature. He hastened past the ladies who stood petrified and unable to move, and came down to the strand where the people were gathered. In a moment he found the solution of the riddle. His intended marble palace had become involuntarily framed between a projecting, rounded cliff on one side and a pine top on the other, so that the limestone slab showed as a round circle and, with the two windows which were too faintly painted, it imitated the map of the moon's disk.

The people who had been posted as to the exact hour when the miracle would appear, as promised by the commissioner, regarded the approaching man with frightened but venerating glances and the men contrary to what had been their habit to him raised their hats and caps.

"Now what do you say about my mirage?" asked he jokingly.

Nobody answered, but the head pilot, who was the most courageous, pointed northwest towards the heavens, where the real moon was hanging pale in its first quarter.

The miracle thus was crushing, and the strong impressions which the two moons had already produced was too deep to be effaced with an explanation. And when the commissioner made an attempt to the beginning of which nobody listened and the people stood infatuated just as though enamored of the fear of the inexplicable, he ceased trying to remove their belief. He had wished to give them a proof that neither he nor nature could break laws, and, nevertheless, chance had made him a wizard.

When he turned back he found his betrothed in an ecstatic state restrained by her mother, but when he appeared, she freed herself and falling on her knees she cried with half insane gestures, and words which seemed to have been borrowed from some spiritualistic circle.

" Mighty spirit, we fear thee! Take away our fear, that we may love thee! "

The case had already assumed a hazardous turn and the commissioner tried with all his art to explain the involuntary miracle, but in vain. The enjoyment of being infatuated, the numbness of fear and, behind it, the lurking feeling of ambition not to admit the confusion of senses, had so taken possession of the young girl's mind that no remonstrances or assurances availed. The mother with her unchanging, even temperament did not seem to know where she was and had forgotten the whole phenomenon of nature through her daughter's disquieting behavior.

But now the mass of people on the beach had, through Miss Mary's cries and gesticulations, turned their attention from the performance out on the sea towards her, and when they saw the young woman on her knees before the white dressed man, with his deep dark glances and bare head, out here on the rock, there must have passed before them some reminiscences from the Bible history about a young man who did miracles; for they crowded together in haste and began to whisper, while at the exhortation of the head pilot one of the women hastened into the nearest cottage and returned with a three-years-old child which had a foul ulcer on its cheek.

With the ability to call forth a mirage there

should also follow a supernatural knowledge of healing.

The rôle which was thrown on the commissioner, began to trouble him beyond measure, and when he saw the fishing population, pilots and custom house men, leave their work, and carpenters and finishers leave the building of the chapel to listen to his words as to prophesies with miraculous power, he became afraid as though before a power of nature that he had conjured up, but could not check. The moment, however, had come when he must express himself exactly, plainly, and turn them away.

"Good people," commenced he. But silently the reflection came: how to go on, what words to use, when each expression required an explanation which again presupposed foreknowledge, which was lacking. And during the second he meditated over the distance that lay between him and them, he heard steps approaching, and turning around, he saw a man who resembled an old sailor on his leave.

The man lifted a round felt hat and looked somewhat timorous at first, but coming nearer he straightened himself up and was just going to say something, when the commissioner relieved him from his embarrassment by the question:

"Perhaps you are the Home Mission preacher whom we expect?"

"I am the same!" answered the newcomer.

"Will you not say a few words to the people here, who are in a state of tumult on account of a phenomenon of nature which they do not wish to have explained and which I at this moment cannot elucidate"— the commissioner grasped at this in his eagerness to get out of his false position.

The preacher at once declared himself prepared. Stroking his long chin whiskers he took a Bible from his pocket.

When the people saw the black book a tremor passed through them and some of the men uncovered their heads.

The preacher turned the pages a moment and finally stopped, cleared his throat and began to read.

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sack cloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks

of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath has come; and who shall be able to stand?"

The commissioner, who at once observed the dangerous turn the affair had taken, had drawn his betrothed half forcibly from the dangerous neighborhood, and got her down to the beach so that he could give her the right views and show, that it was no moon which had fallen from the heaven, that it was only the Italian landscape he had promised to arrange for her birthday.

But now it was too late. The girl's inner eye had already seen the vision in its first form, and the preacher's exciting interpretation had etched in that first delusion. He had toyed with the spirits of nature, conjured a foe to help him, as he believed, and then all had gone over to the foe so that he now stood alone.

While Mary's glances were still riveted to the preacher on the rock, he turned, as a trial, to the mother and whispered:

"Help us out of this. Follow me out to the skerry and see that it is only a plaything, a birthday joke."

"I cannot judge in these things," answered the mother, "and will not judge. But I believe . . . that you should be married soon."

It was an advice, sober, prosaic, but from this old lady, who was herself a mother, it sounded so prudent, especially as it agreed with his own sharp understanding, he found, however, the explanation somewhat simplified. And after the hint he had received he went straight to the girl, and placing his arm round her waist, looked into her eyes with a smile, which she could not fail to understand, and kissed her lips.

At the same moment the girl seemed released from the wizard up on the rock, and without resistance she clung to her friend's arm and followed him almost dancing to her mother's cottage.

"Thanks," whispered she as she glanced into his eyes, "I thank you that you — how shall I say it?"

"Delivered you from the hobgoblin," filled in Borg.

"Yes, from the goblins!"

And she turned to look at the passed danger.

"Do not look back!" warned her betrothed as he pulled Mary through the cottage door, while fragments from the preacher's flow of words were wafted down to him by the wind.

CHAPTER NINTH

WHEN the commissioner awoke one morning eight days later after a night of perfect rest, his first clear thought was that he must leave the skerry, go anywhere to be alone, collect himself, find himself again. The preacher's arrival had the desired effect in one way, namely to "scare the mob," so that the tumult and rudeness ceased; but on the other hand the commissioner had not been able to enjoy the newly gained peace, for the exalted condition of his betrothed obliged him to keep her always in his sight. So he had accompanied her, and formally guarded her from morning to night; and by endless talk upon the questions of religion tried to keep her aloof from the preacher's seducing talk. All these matters which he had fought through in his youth, he now had to fight over again; and as new counter-proofs had been brought forth since then, he must reëdit his whole apology. He improvised psychological explanations of God, faith, miracles, eternity and prayer; and he imagined that the girl understood him. But when after three days he found that she held the same position and that this matter of feeling lay outside the conversation, he dropped

the whole subject and sought by awakening the erratical with its new sphere of feeling to drive away the first. But this he must soon give up, for to speak of that which should be lived only excited the girl's feelings still more, and he soon observed that there existed secret bridges between the religious ecstasy and the sensual one. From the love of Christ she ran so easily over to love of the man on that broad drawbridge the love of one's neighbor, and from abstinence one could trip over the footbridge renunciation to its neighbor penance; a little contention awakened the disagreeable feeling of debt which must be resolved in a lustful feeling — the reconciliation.

In his need he must first tear up the bridges, place her face to face with carnal desire, awake her avidity for the temporal, which he delineated in glowing colors. But when he had so succeeded and retreated at the last moment, there arose the coldness of disappointment in her, and when he then tried to cultivate her feelings, and lead them out to the thoughts of offspring and family, she withdrew and explained to him with determination, that she would not have any children. She could even use a phraseology which is current among a certain group of women, saying that she would not be the womb which he lacked; or carry his heirs, whom she must with danger to her life bring to the world for him.

Then he felt that nature had placed something between them which he did not yet understand. He consoled himself by imagining that it was only the butterfly's fear to lay its eggs and die, the flower's suspicion that its beauty would fade away with the setting of its seed.

But he had worn himself out in these eight days; his fine wheels of thought had begun to halt in their pivot holes, and the spring in the movement had become relaxed.

After such a day of exertion, when he would have worked for a couple of hours, his head was filled with trifles. Small words repeated themselves almost audibly to his ear; gesticulations and mannerisms, that she had used in their conversation, miraged themselves, suggestions how he ought to have answered now and then, and the recollection of an appropriate repartee which he had made gave him a momentary pleasure. In a word, his head was full of bagatelles, and now he observed that he had tried to straighten out a chaos; that he had conversed as a schoolboy instead of exchanging thoughts with a mature woman; that he had given out from himself masses of power without getting anything in return; that he had placed a dry sponge in the center of his soul, and that the sponge had swelled, while he himself had become dry.

He loathed everything; was tired, and longed

to get out for a moment; for be free forever he could not.

When he now looked out through the window, about five o'clock in the morning, he saw only a dense fog which stood immovable notwithstanding a light breeze from the south. But far from being discouraged thereby, he felt attracted by this light, white obscurity, which would hide him and seclude him from the little fragment of the earth, where he now felt himself tied down.

The barometer and weather vane told him that there would be sunshine later in the day, and therefore he stepped into his boat without long preparations; only provided with chart and compass, on which, however, he did not intend to rely, as he could hear the whistling buoy three miles out at sea, just in the direction in which he would seek a landing.

He therefore put full sail on and was soon in the fog. Here, where the eyes were free from all impressions of color and form, he felt first the pleasure of isolation from the medley of an outer world. He had as it were his own atmosphere around him, soaring onwards alone as on another celestial body, in a medium, which was not air but water vapors, more agreeable and more refreshing to inhale than the exsiccating air with its superfluous seventy-nine per cent of nitrogen, which had remained without evident purpose,

when the elements of the earth emerged from the chaos of gases.

It was not an obscure, smoke colored mist, through which the sunlight shone. It was light, like newly melted silver. Warm as wadding it lay healingly round his tired ego, protecting it from jars and pressure. He enjoyed for a moment this fully-awake rest of the senses, without sound, without color, without smell, and he felt how his pained head was soothed by this safety from contact with others. He was sure of not being questioned; needed not to answer, nor talk. The apparatus was standing still a moment, now that all conducts had been cut off; and so he began again to think clearly, systematically over all that had passed. But what he had just gone through was so inferior, so trifling, that he must first let the bilge water run off before the fresh came in.

In the distance he heard the whistling buoy cry at intervals of several minutes, and guided by the sound he steered his course right into the mist.

It became silent again, and only the splashing of the boat at the bow and the purling aft in the wake made him conscious that he was moving forwards. Immediately after he heard a sea gull cry in the fog, and at the same time it seemed to him that he heard the dashing and rustle about the prow of a boat coming abaft, and when he shouted to avoid the danger, he received no an-

swer, but heard only the hissing of the water as when a boat is falling off.

After a moment of sailing he observed to windward the top of a mast with mainsail and jib, but nothing was to be seen of the hull or helmsman for they were hidden by the high swells of the sea.

This occurrence under other circumstances would not have disturbed his thought, but now it made an impression which was momentarily inexplicable, and which caused a fear, which was only one step removed from thoughts of persecution. The newly awakened suspicions were further aroused, when he shortly after caught sight of the haunting boat which shot by him on the lee side, as though painted on the mist, without his being able to get sight of the helmsman who was hidden by the mainsail.

He now hailed again, but instead of an answer he saw only the boat fall off so much that he observed that the stern sheet was empty; and then the apparition vanished in the all devouring mist.

Accustomed to free himself from fear of the unknown, he at once formed suggestions to explain it, but stopped finally at the question, why the helmsman hid himself, for that there must be a helmsman on a sailboat, which did not drift, he had no doubt. Why did he not want to be seen?

In usual cases one does not want to be seen when going on a bad errand, wishing to be by oneself, or intending to frighten somebody. That the unknown sailor did not seek solitude was probable, as he held the same course, and if he would frighten an intrepid person, who was not susceptible to superstition, he could find some better way. However he held his course onward towards the buoy, incessantly, doggedly pursued by the haunting boat to the leaward, still at such a distance, that it appeared only as condensed fog.

Upon coming farther out where the wind was stronger the mist seemed to grow somewhat thinner, and like long silver bullion lay the fog-silvered sunlight on the crests of the waves. With the rising of the wind the crying of the buoy increased, and now he steered straight into the sunlight where the mist had parted, and ran at highest speed towards the buoy. There it lay swinging on the wave, cinnabar-red and shining, moist as a taken-out lung with its great black windpipe pointed slanting upwards into the air. And when the wave next time compressed the air, it raised a cry, as though the sea roared after the sun, the bottom chain clinked until it had run out, and now when the waves sank and sucked back the air, there arose a roaring out of the depth as from the giant proboscis of a drowning mastodon.

It was the first mighty impression he had had after a month of prattle and trivialities.

He admired the genius of man, that had hung this buoy on the insidious wolf, the sea, that it should itself caution its defenseless victims. He envied this hermit, who was permitted to lie fettered to a bottom rock in the middle of the sea and with its roaring to beat the wind and wave day and night so that it could be heard miles around; to be the first to give the voyager a welcome to his land; and to wail forth its pain and be heard.

The sight was quickly passed, and the demi-darkness again closed round the boat, which now fell off towards the skerry for which he had started to rest. For half an hour he lay on the same tack until he heard the breakers beating on the strand; then he fell off to leeward and soon sped into a cove where he could land.

It was the last skerry outside the channel and consisted of a couple of acres of red gneiss without any vegetation other than a few lichens on places where the drifting ice had not scraped the rocks perfectly clean. Only sea gulls and mews had their resting place here, and now as the commissioner moored his boat and stepped up on the highest point of the skerry they gave forth cries of alarm. Here he wrapped himself in his blanket, and placed himself in a well-polished crevice,

which made him a comfortable arm chair. Here, without witness, without auditors, he gave himself up to thoughts and let them loose, confessed himself, scrutinized himself inwardly and heard his own voice from within. Only two months of rubbing against other beings, and he had through the law of accommodation lost the better part of himself, had become used to acquiescing to avoid disputes, drilled himself to yield to avoid a break, and developed into a characterless, malleable, sociable fellow; with his head full of bagatelles and being urged to speak in an abbreviated, simplified vocabulary, he felt that his scale of language had lost its semi-tones, and that his thoughts had been switching in on old worn rails, which led back to the ballast place. Old lax sophisms about respecting others' belief, that everybody will be happy in his grime, had crept back into him, and he had from pure politeness performed as a wizard and finally got a dangerous competitor on his hands, who every moment threatened to liberate the only soul he would unite with his own.

A smile crossed his lips when he thought of how he had fooled these people, who believed they had fooled him: and with a subdued voice he involuntarily ejaculated, "asses," which made him start, frightened at the thought that somebody might have heard him.

And so the silent thoughts continued: They

believed they had caught his soul, and he had caught them! They imagined that he went their errands, and they did not know that he used them as a gymnastical exercise for his soul and to feel the enjoyment of power.

But these thoughts, which he had not dared to acknowledge before as his own, proclaimed themselves now as the children of his soul, big, healthy children, whom he acknowledged as his own. And what had he done otherwise than the others had willed to do, but could not! And this young woman, who believed she had turned a hand organ for herself, did not suspect that she was selected to the sounding board of his soul . . .

At this moment he jumped up, and interrupted the course of his dangerous thoughts, for he plainly heard footsteps on the flat rocks in the fog, and although he at once guessed that it was an error of hearing, caused by the solitude and fear of being taken unawares, he turned his steps towards his boat. But when he found it in good condition, he decided to go around the skerry to search for the other boat, for there must be one here, since another being had come over. He climbed on the strand bowlders and soon found behind the next point on the lee side a boat with the same sprit sail rig, as he had seen out on the sea. It was thus evident that the sailor must be on the skerry, and now the commissioner began a razzia

in the fog, but always kept in the neighborhood of the boats, so that he could cut off retreat. When after having cried out several times without getting an answer he finally saw that he must leave the boats in order to catch the mysterious being, he went down to the boats, and took off the tillers to make every escape impossible, and so he went into the mist again. He heard steps before him and followed them by the sound, but soon heard them in an entirely other direction. Tired of the hunt and provoked by the fruitlessness of the endeavors, he decided to make a short ending to the scene, as he had no mind to wait until the fog had disappeared.

With as loud a voice as he could command, he cried:

"If there is anybody there, answer, for I am going to shoot."

"Lord Jesus! Do not shoot!" was heard in the fog.

The commissioner seemed to have heard this voice before, but a very long time ago, perhaps in his youth. And now when he approached the place, where the unknown stood, and saw its silhouette outlines gray to gray, there awoke old memories of these contours of a human being. The inward bowed knees, the arms all too long and the deformed left shoulder had a counterpart picture in memory's storage of a schoolmate in

the third class in the high school. But when he caught sight of the colporteur's American whiskers appearing through the mist, the picture did not correspond longer, and he only saw the man upon the rock, who had applied the Revelation to the mirage.

With a raised cap and a frightened look he approached the commissioner, who did not feel himself safe with this sneaking pursuer, for in reality he carried no firearms. To disguise his uncertainty he assumed a sharp tone, when he asked:

"Why do you hide from me?"

"I have not hidden myself, the mist did it," answered the preacher softly and insinuatingly.

"But why were you not sitting at the tiller in your boat?"

"Hm, I did not know that one was obliged to sit on the stern sheet and therefore I sat to windward to keep the boat buoyant! For you see I had a sheet on the end of the tiller such as we use up in Roslagen."

The explanations were acceptable, but still did not answer the question, why he followed the commissioner out here. And he felt now, that here must be a close fight of souls, for it was not by chance that they had met out here.

"What do you seek out here so early in the morning?" the commissioner took up the broken thread.

"Yes, how shall I say it, I feel sometimes, as though I am in need of being alone with myself."

The answer found a certain echo in the questioner, and at the expression of sympathy, which the preacher could read in his face, he added:

"For, you see, when I search myself in meditation and prayer and find myself, even so I find my God."

A naïve confession lay in these words, but the commissioner would not translate the involuntary heresy and draw such conclusions as: God is thus my own self or in my own self, because he held a certain esteem for this man, who could be alone with a fiction, and thus to a certain degree alone.

While the commissioner regarded the preacher's face, which was overgrown with long brown whiskers except on the upper lip as sailors and colporteurs usually wear them, probably to let out the spoken word and still resemble an apostle, he seemed to perceive a face behind this face, and annoyed by this labor which his memory had unconsciously undertaken, he asked bluntly:

"Have we not met each other before?"

"Yes, certainly we have," answered the preacher; "and you, sir commissioner, have, perhaps without knowing it, had such a great influence on my life, that it might be said you determined my path."

"Oh, no! Tell me about it, for I do not remember it!" said the commissioner, and placing himself on the rock, he invited the other to sit down.

"Yes, it is certainly about twenty-five years ago that we were together in the third class at school . . .

"What was your name then?" interrupted the commissioner.

"At that time I was called Olsson and nicknamed Ox-Olle, because my father was a farmer and I was dressed in homespun clothes."

"Olsson? Wait a moment! You could reckon best of us all."

"Yes, so it was! But there came a day, and it was the principal's fiftieth birthday. We had dressed the school with leaves and flowers, and after the lessons were ended someone proposed that the boys in our class should take the bouquets and carry them home to the principal's wife and daughter. I remember that you thought it unnecessary as the family of the principal had nothing to do with the school, but often encroached on its affairs in a disturbing manner. However, you went — and so did I. As I walked up the steps, you caught sight of my homespun clothes I presume, and noticing that I carried the nicest bouquet, you burst out: 'Is Saul also among the prophets!'"

"That I have entirely forgotten," said the commissioner very shortly.

"But I never forgot it," responded the preacher with trembling voice. "I had had it thrown in my face, that I was the scabby sheep, the intruder, who could never seriously extend homage to a woman of station. I quit school in order to devote myself to business and thereby gain money and fine clothes quickly, and learn manners and refined language. But I never gained a first class position. My exterior, my language, my appearance were against me. Then I began to go alone by myself, and in the solitude I found powers growing in me which I had never suspected. Clergyman I had first thought to be, but now it was too late. The solitude gave me fears of human beings, and these fears of human beings made me entirely alone, so alone that I must search for my only acquaintance in God, and in the Saviour of the neglected, the scabby, the outcasts, Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. This I have to thank you for!"

The last words were spoken with a certain bitterness, and the commissioner found it prudent to have fair play and broke out.

"Then you have gone on hating me for twenty-five years?"

"Excessively! But no longer since I have left the revenge to God."

"So, you have a God who revenges! Do you believe that He selects you for an implement, or do you think that he will let His electric spark strike me, or that He is going to blow over my boat or mark me with the smallpox?"

"The ways of the Lord are past knowing, but the ways of iniquity are manifest to everybody!"

"Do you see such gross iniquity in a boy's thoughtless talk, that God should persecute him a whole man's age? I wonder if that revenging God is not in your heart, where you lately insisted that you made appointments with Him?"

Snared by his own words the preacher could not longer control himself.

"You blaspheme! Now I know who you are! The apple does not fall far from the tree! Now I understand the whole craft of Satan. You build the Lord a house for a brothel as an offering to a harlot! You play wizard and magician to get people to fall down and worship the denier. But the Lord says: 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie!'"

The last words he had thrown out with an in-

credible volubility and exaltation, without seeking for them elsewhere than on his lips, and just as though he feared a crushing answer which would weaken their impression, he turned his back and went down to his boat.

Meantime the mist had lifted, and the sea spread its pure blue water soothingly and acquittingly.

The commissioner remained awhile in his rocky chair, and meditated on the subjection of the soul under the same laws that govern the physical forces. The wind tore up a wave down on Esthonia; that wave chased another, and the last which transmitted the motion to the Swedish coast, removed a small pebble, which had afforded support to a rock; and after a man's age the results would be shown in the tumbling down of the rock; and this would be followed by a new undermining of the uncovered rock which now lay exposed.

His brain twenty-five years ago had thrown out what was to him a meaningless word, that word had penetrated an ear and put a brain into such a strong agitation that it still vibrated after having given direction to the whole life of a human being. And who knows, if this innervation current had not again been reënforced by contact and friction, so that it once more with invigorated force would unload itself and bring other counter

forces into action, producing disturbances and destruction in the lives of others!

Now when the preacher's boat sped into sight round the point, bearing down to East Skerry, the commissioner got such a sure feeling that there sat a foe who was marching down to his forts, that he arose and went to his boat, to go home and place himself on the defensive.

. . . . . .

When he was well seated in the boat and calmed by the gentle rocking of the waves, he was seized by a strong desire to still tarry a few hours on the sea in perfect solitude and let the last disquieting impressions blow away.

Why should he even fear this man's influence on his betrothed, as she would still show herself unsuited to a union for life, if she sunk back to a level with the uneducated. But nevertheless it grieved him that there existed this fear. It reminded of the behavior of those men, who were living in the fear of losses and which is stamped with the name jealousy. Was it the feeling of an inability to keep, which betrayed a frailness in him? Or was it not rather a frailness in her not to be able to retain a hold, when the balloon should ascend, leaving the sheet anchor religion, and throwing away the sacks of ballast, the feelings? Certainly the latter would have been the better way, notwithstanding they had got a cer-

tain authority with those, who had nothing to lose.

He now tacked and lay off the skerry to south-east, a point from which he had not seen his prison before. Highest up on the hill he saw the skeleton of the unfinished chapel with its staging, but he did not see any laborers, although the morning was far advanced. He did not even notice any boats out fishing. There was on the whole a great stillness on the skerry, and no people were to be seen even by the custom house cottage or the pilots' outlook. He turned and stood on another tack to sail round the skerry. But when he came outside of the same, the sea became higher and he gained only a little by the tack, so it took a whole hour before he could scud down to the harbor. Now he saw the cottage where the ladies lived, and as soon as he had sped by the point of the harbor, he observed all the inhabitants of the island gathered round the house, on the porch of which the preacher stood bare-headed, speaking.

With a clear insight, that here impended a battle, he landed, furled the sail and went up to his chamber.

Through the open window he heard the people singing a hymn.

He would have liked now to sit down to his work, but the thought that maybe he would soon be interrupted, hindered him from beginning it.

A painful half hour passed during which he learned more plainly than ever before, that he did not own himself longer, did not rule over two square meters, on which he could lock himself up to avoid the touch of souls, which like barnacles on the whale's hide fastened themselves there to finally by their mass impede his motion.

The door opened now after a short knock, and Miss Mary stood before him, with a new expression in her face, resembling pained reproach and superior compassion.

She came besides with the feeling of being backed by the universal opinion of the people, and therefore felt strong against this solitary man.

He let her speak first so as to have a point to start from.

"Where have you been?" commenced she with an attempt not to sound too arrogant.

"I have been out for a sail!"

"Without inviting me?"

"I did not know that you were particular about that!"

"Yes, you did know it, but surely you would be alone with your dark thoughts!"

"Perhaps!"

"Certainly! Don't you think that I have observed it? Don't you believe that I have seen how you are becoming tired of me?"

"Have I proved tired of you, I who follow you

day in and day out, though on a morning, when you usually are asleep, I took the liberty to sail for a couple of hours? But maybe you have become tired of learning to fish, for I have not seen you once out at sea."

"It is not the time to fish now as you well know," answered Miss Mary fully persuaded that she spoke the truth.

"No, I see that!" interposed the commissioner with the purpose of approaching the very mine, with the risk of an explosion. "I see how the people abandon their work to listen to sermons . . ."

Now an eruption was ready.

"Was it not you, who wished to have a church out here?"

"Yes, Sundays. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh go to church. Here no work is done any day, but there is preaching every day. And instead of making themselves and families an honest income here on this earth, they all race after such an uncertain thing as heaven. The very laborers on the chapel have left their work, so that we shall never see a roof on that church, and I expect every moment to hear that poverty has broken out, so that we must be prepared for charity . . ."

"That is just what I was going to speak about," interrupted Miss Mary, glad to have avoided tak-

ing up the subject herself, still overlooking that it was exhausted in advance by the commissioner.

"I have not come here to exercise charity; I am here to teach the people how to get along without charity."

"You are at the bottom a heartless person, although you appear to be otherwise."

"And you would show your big heart at my expense without being willing to offer a yard of the trimming from your gown."

"I hate you! I hate you!" burst out the girl with a hideous expression on her face. "Surely I know who you are, I know all, all, all!"

"Well, why not leave me then?" asked the commissioner in a steel cold tone.

"I shall leave you! I shall!" cried she and approached the door, but without going.

The commissioner, who had taken a seat at the table, took up a pen and began to write to avoid all temptation of taking up a conversation, which was ended, as everything had been said.

He heard, as in a dream, sobbing and how the door closed, how steps sounded in the hall, and squeakings of the stairs.

When he awoke and read the paper, over which his pen had been flying, he saw that the word Pandora was written there so many times, that he could calculate that a long while had passed since the scene was ended.

But the word struck him, and his inquisitiveness awoke as to its meaning, which he during the lapse of years had forgotten, although he had a faint memory about it from the mythology. He took his dictionary from the table, opened it and read:

" Pandora, the Eve of the ancients, the earth's first woman. Sent by the gods for revenge on account of Prometheus having stolen the fire, and given it to human beings, with all its misfortunes, after which they inhabitated the earth. Represented in poesy under the form of something good, which is an evil illusion, a creation, intended for deceit and surprise."

This was mythology like the tale of Eve, who debarred human beings from Paradise. But when the tale was confirmed from century to century and he had learned himself, how the presence of a woman on this little piece of earth out in the sea had already made dusk, where he would spread light, then there must have lain an idea in the Hellenic and Jewish poet's figurative style.

That she hated him, that he felt and knew, as she took sides with the low crowd down there, but, nevertheless he would not doubt her love, even if this love only consisted of the dandelion's attraction to the sun to borrow beams of light for a poor imitation of the yellow disk. But there existed besides something low as in that which is

base, something evil with the desire to injure, a battle for power, which was out of place, as his aim was a victory over the irrational. To tell her this, yes, that would be to break the relation when this depended on his submission or at least his acknowledging her superiority, and this would be to build a life on a white lie, which would grow, wax and perhaps smother all possibility of an honest cohabitation. Just in this lay the deepest reason of all the relative misfortunes of marriage, that the man goes into the union sometimes with a willful lie, often the prey of an hallucination, when he fancies his ego into the being whom he would assimulate. Of this illusion; *second sight,* Mill had become infatuated to such a degree, that he believed he got all his sharp thoughts from the simple woman whom he had lifted up to himself.

It was love's prize from time immemorial, that the man should conceal what the woman was, and on this secrecy centuries had built a chaos of lies, which science did not dare to disturb, which the bravest statesmen did not dare to touch and which cause the theologian to deny his Paul, when it comes to " women in the churches."

But his love had just begun and taken fire, when he saw her look up to him with beseeching glances; and that love had fled, when she came with the vanquishing smile of stupidity after having

trampled down what he would have formed for her happiness and that of many others.

"Ended!" said he to himself, arose and locked the door.

Ended with his youthful hopes of finding the woman he sought. "That woman, who was born with the sense to see her sex's inferiority to the other sex."

He had certainly now and then met one or another, who admitted the fact, but who finally and always reserved themselves as to the reason of the fact, laying the blame on a non-existing oppression, and promising themselves that with greater liberty they would soon surpass the men; and then the battle was in full sway.

He would not wear out his intelligence in an uneven fight with mosquitoes, whom he could not hit with a cane, because they were too small and too many, therefore there must now be an end forever to this fruitless searching after the non-existing. He would let all his power go out in labor, lay aside kin, family, home and sexual impulses and leave the multiplying to other "reproductive animals."

The feeling of being free placed his soul at rest, and it seemed to him as though a pall had lost its hold in his brain, which began to operate without concern. The thought that he did not need more to make his exterior agreeable, caused him to lay

aside a certain kind of collar which annoyed him, but which his bethrothed had explained to be *chic*. He arranged his hair in a more comfortable manner and observed how it calmed his nerves, for he had been in constant strife about the coiffure his betrothed liked best. The tobacco pipe which he loved as an old acquaintance and which he had been obliged to lay aside, was taken out again, the dressing gown and moccasins, that he had not dared to use for a long time, again gave freedom from pressure, which reminded of a more airy medium in which he could breathe without difficulty, and think without restriction.

And now, freed from all these accommodation constraints, he observed what tyranny even in small details he had lived through. He could walk in his room without the fear of being embarrassed by a knock at the door, deliver himself up to his thoughts without feeling himself false.

He had not long enjoyed the newly gained liberty, when somebody rapped at the door. His body jarred as though some mooring still held him, and when he heard the mother's voice, the oppressing thought struck him like a club, that it was not ended, that it must begin over again.

His first intention was to let the door remain closed, but a sense of propriety, the fear of being regarded as a coward determined him to open it. And when he saw the old lady's cheerful, prudent

eye, as she with a kind smile and a roguish shake of her head stepped in, it was to him as though the last half hour's scene had been only a dream after which he had awakened glad that it was past.

"Have we now squabbled again?" commenced the old lady, taking away the disagreeableness of the remark by the familiar *we*. "You must get married, children, before there is a rupture! Believe an old woman's word; and don't think that you test your hearts as engaged, for the longer you are engaged, the worse it will become!"

"But after that it is too late to break it," answered the commissioner. "And when one has already discovered such a difference in disposition and opinions, so . . ."

"What are these opinions? You cannot have different opinions, no, though the girl did have it lonesome when Axel was away, and therefore she run after the colporteur. And as far as disposition is concerned, it comes and goes, according to the condition of the nerves. And Axel, who is such a knowing man, ought to know how women are!"

He could have kissed her hand at the first enchantment of finding that woman, who knew her own sex, but then he remembered that he had heard this manner of speaking ill about other women each time a woman would gain him, and

that it was more of flattery than an admission, for when it came to earnestness, the utterance was always taken back with interest. Therefore he limited himself to answering:

"Let time pass, little mother! Get married out here I cannot, but let us only return to the city in the fall . . . supposing that Mary shows more sympathy in my work and less repugnance to my way of seeing the world and living."

"Axel is so dreadfully profound, and if a poor girl cannot always follow it, why it is nothing to be astonished at."

"Yes, but if she cannot follow me upwards, I cannot on the other hand follow her downwards; but the latter seems to be her precise will, so precise, that it appears to me to-day, as though there lay a hidden hate behind it."

"Hate? It is only love, my friend! Come down now and say something friendly, and she will be all right again."

"Never, after the words we exchanged to-day! For either these words mean something and then we are foes, or they mean nothing, and then one of the party is irresponsible."

"Yes, she is irresponsible, but Axel should well know that a woman is a child until she becomes a mother. Come now, my friend, and play with the child, otherwise she will select other playthings, which may be more dangerous."

"Yes, but, dearest, I cannot play the whole day without being tired, and I do not believe either that Mary is pleased to be treated as a child."

"Yes, she is, only it don't look so! Ah, what a child Axel is in such affairs!"

Again a politeness, which from anyone but a mother-in-law would have been an insult! And when she now took his hand to lead him out, he felt all resistance cease. She had by leaving his argument unanswered led the conversation away from the question; she had blown at the skein instead of untangling it, caressed his doubts to rest and stroked away the disquiet and by her womanly atmosphere, her motherly manner got him to lay aside his will and personal liberty.

And after he had changed his coat, he followed obediently, almost with pleasure the incessantly chatting old lady down the staircase to continue the play and put on handcuffs.

Upon reaching the hall he met the preacher, who delivered a letter to him with the Academy of Agriculture's stamp.

The commissioner broke the seal on the spot, and put the letter in his pocket, as though glad he had got something, a substitute for conversation, a lightning rod; he burned to communicate the news to the mother who was waiting.

"We are going to have a visitor," said he.

"The officials have sent me a young man who wants to learn to fish."

"So, it is delightful that Axel is going to have some man for company," said the mother with true sincerity.

And the commissioner went with light steps down to his waiting betrothed, sure that with a novelty on hand he could immediately pass over the most disagreeable of explanations.

CHAPTER TENTH

A FEW days later, the commissioner had been out sailing alone to lay down salmon tralls secretly, and now after having delayed his dinner hour as he went up from the harbor, he heard chatting and laughter from the porch of the ladies' cottage. Without intending to listen he went thither, and when he reached the westerly gable wall, he saw through the two windows in the large chamber, which were in the angle of the cottage corner, that the two ladies were eating dinner on the porch and had a male visitor at the table. He took a step forwards and caught sight of Miss Mary, who with sparkling eyes raised a glass of wine to pass it over the table to the guest, of whom he only saw a pair of broad shoulders. Suddenly it came to him, that he had seen these movements and expressions before in the girl's eyes, and he remembered her first appearance on the islet, when she treated the boatman to a glass of beer, and he had thought she coquetted with the churl! But now he was astonished, that he had never seen this expression in her eyes, when she looked at him. Could her glances only have

reflected his? Or did she always hide her innermost thoughts from him, who should be her victim?

He regarded her for a moment, and the longer he looked, the more strange seemed the expression in the girl's face, so strange, that he became frightened, as when one discovers a deceit in his nearest related.

When one can see so much, when not seen, what then shall one not hear? he thought and stopped behind the corner to listen.

The mother arose now and went into the kitchen, so that the young couple were left alone.

At the same time they lowered their voices, and Miss Mary's glances became humid, while she listened to the stranger's passionately spoken words.

"Jealousy is the dirtiest of all vices, and in love there does not exist any right of ownership . . ."

"Thanks for these words! A thousand thanks!" said Miss Mary, and raised her glass, while her eyes were moist with some half-shed tears. "You are a real man, although you are young, for you believe in woman."

"I believe in woman as the most magnificent the creation has brought forth, the best and the truest," continued the young man with rising transport. "And I believe in her, because I believe in God!"

"You believe in God?" Miss Mary continued.

" It shows that you are also intelligent, for it is only stupidity that denies the creator! "

The commissioner considered that he had heard enough, and to see at the same time how great the power of dissimulation his chosen friend for life could possess, he stepped forth suddenly, after he had gained control of all his facial muscles and assumed a beaming expression, as though he was charmed to see again his desired one.

The girl retained the expression of enchanted revery in her face, and with the same fire as the just expressed confession of faith in women had produced she received her betrothed's embrace and returned it with a kiss, more burning than ever before.

Thereafter she jokingly introduced Assistant Blom, who had arrived early in the morning and had gained all hearts on the skerry, being a fisherman unequaled before.

" And we were just talking about the herring off Bohus, when you came and disturbed us!" the girl ended the presentation with.

The commissioner let the lie, and the dangerous word " disturbed " and the challenge " all hearts " pass, while he reached his hand to a giant youth of about twenty and some years, who had less ability to dissimulate, and with a guilty look grasped the outstretched hand, and stuttered a few incomprehensible words.

At the same time the mother came out, greeted her future son-in-law and began to arrange the table.

A conversation was soon started, and Miss Mary, very likely in the feeling of having a support, began to joke at her betrothed's toilet.

"That veil there, is precious you know," joked she; "you should also have a parasol when you are sitting at the helm."

"That will come, that will come," answered the commissioner, hiding the disagreeable impression which this exposure before a subordinate and a stranger had made on him.

The assistant, who already felt himself above the considerate foreman, but still could not help feeling uncomfortable at the cruel treatment he received, was seized with a tactless compassion, and drumming with his long fingers on the veil, which the commissioner wore on his hat, he said:

"Yes, but this here is very practical!" And hastily falling again into the flirting manner he had begun at the first moment, he added: "And if Miss Mary were just as careful of her beautiful complexion . . ."

"As you about your beautiful hands—" slipped from the girl, while she touched the hand that rested on the table and which was rolling balls from bread; and she seemed at once to be

back in the humor, which her betrothed could guess had prevailed the whole forenoon.

Feeling himself ridiculous like one who is eating alone in the presence of those who are satisfied, he needed all his nerve power to disguise the depression which the overheard conversation had produced. "They already compliment each other's members in my presence," thought he with loathing. But perceived at once, that he would be lost if he showed a single sign of discontent over the improper behavior, which discontent would immediately be stamped as that dirty vice, he had lately heard spoken of.

"The assistant has indeed an unusually beautiful hand bespeaking intelligence," said he, as with the mien of a connoisseur he examined the object of his betrothed's admiration.

But she, who did not wish for this agreement with her views, switched aside and searched for a new lash for his supposed stupidity.

"One cannot speak of intelligent hands," she broke out with a laugh, which sounded somewhat tipsy.

"Therefore I use the more correct expression of bespeaking intelligence . . ."

"Oh, you philosopher!" scornfully laughed the girl. "You dream, so that you do not see that we have eaten up all the radishes from you."

"I am glad that the traveler has a relish, and

I see with pleasure that you have forestalled me in caring for his well being," said the commissioner, unconstrainedly. "Permit me to give you a welcome, Assistant Blom, and wish you much pleasure from your sojourn here in the solitude. And now I leave you in Miss Mary's care, she can give you all the preliminary explanations about fishing affairs; meantime I go up and rest myself. Farewell, my dove," he turned to the girl; "now take care of the young man and lead him in the right path. Good night, mama," he addressed to the widow of the exchequer officer and kissed her hand.

His sortie had come entirely unexpected, while its adequate motive and rounded form, leaving no trace of ill feeling, had saved him from protests and at the same time gave him the last word and a superiority which was grudged him.

. . . . . .

Upon reaching his chamber, he had only time to be astonished that "the fear of loss" could bring him such incredible ability to dissimulate, suppress disagreeable perceptions, to harden himself, before he was lying on the sofa with a blanket over his head and sleeping without dreams. When he awoke after a couple of hours, he arose with a resolve, which he felt that he would hold fast to for life, to free himself from this woman.

But just as she through habit had eaten her way into his soul, so she could only be gnawed out the same way again, and the vacant place that he would leave in her, must first be filled by another. By him, whose soul had seemed to set her on fire at the first encounter.

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door.

It was the preacher, who with many excuses stepped in and with some abashment tried to grind out what he had to say.

"Has not the commissioner," began he, "noticed anything like that the people out here have less conscience."

"That I observed at once," answered the commissioner. "What is it that has happened now?"

"Yer, see the laborer on the chapel say, they have lost boards, so that there isn't enough to finish it."

"This does not surprise me, but what have I to do with that?"

"Yer, see, the commissioner was for it and procured what was necessary!"

"That was then! Now I have regretted it, since I have seen that your preaching has taken the people from their work and indirectly made them thieves."

"One cannot directly say . . ."

"No, therefore I said indirectly! But if you

want money, go to somebody else. Tell me one thing; who is the new assistant here?"

"Yer, he has been a sea cadet, they say, you know, and now he would learn fishing as his father is rich, they say, you know."

The commissioner had placed himself at the window, when the conversation commenced, and witnessed now how Miss Mary and the assistant were playing lawn tennis. He had even seen how her gown had lifted in the front every time she leaned backwards to serve the other's ball. Now he saw how the assistant jokingly bent down when the skirt drew up, just as though by gesture and mien to indicate that he saw something.

"Listen now," he said, "I have long thought that it would be of great service for the people's best economy, if there was a provision store, so that the people need not row to the city for their purchases, and it might even be possible, that the merchant could advance them provisions, and sell their fish. What does Mr. Olsson say about it?"

The preacher stroked his long chin whiskers, while his face expressed a mass of shifting desires and changes of mind.

The commissioner now saw through the window, how the assistant had climbed the pole of the look-out and swung horizontally out by his arms, while Miss Mary clapped her hands below him.

"Yes, say, Mr. Olsson, if one could get a provision store here, it would only do good."

"But see, the commonwealth will hardly permit it, unless one could get a storekeeper that could be relied on, I mean a person who . . ."

"We will take a religious man and let a share in the benefit go to the chapel fund; thus we get both the commonwealth and the home mission on our side."

The face of the preacher now cleared up.

"Yes, in such a way it may work!"

"Yes, think of the subject and try to get a suitable person, who will not fleece the people nor wrong the church. Think of it awhile. Now to another subject: I think I have observed that morality stands somewhat low here on the skerry. Has Mr. Olsson seen or suspected, that matters are not as they ought to be down at Vestman's?"

"Hm! Yes, they say, of course, that there is something, but that one does not know! And I do not believe that one need to mix in it!"

"Do you say that! But I wonder, if one ought not to interfere in time, before they betray themselves, for such things generally end ill out here!"

The preacher did not seem at all willing to stir in the case; either he did not find it worth talking about, or he would not offend the people. Besides, his sickly looks seemed to absorb all his thoughts

in his own suffering, so that he with a thwart turn took up his real errand.

"Yes, and so I should like to ask if the commissioner had something to give me, for I think I have got the fever and ague out here in the dampness."

"Ague? Let me see!"

On the impulse of the moment and without forgetting for an instant, that it was a foe who challenged, the commissioner examined the patient's pulse, looked at his tongue and the whites of his eyes and was ready with his prescription.

"Have you poor board at Oman's?"

"Yes, it is wretched," answered the preacher.

"You have malnutrition and shall have food from my table. Have you sworn off all strong drinks?"

"Oh, yes; however, I take a glass of beer . . ."

"Yes, here you have a preparation of china to commence with, which you are to take three times a day. When it is gone let me know."

Therewith he gave him a bottle of china bitters, after which he took the preacher's hand and said:

"You shall not hate me, Mr. Olsson, for we have great common interests, although we go different ways. If I can be of any service to you, I am ready whenever you wish it."

Such a simple manner as a little plausible good will was enough to pervert the sight of the simple

man, so that he believed he had found a friend. With sincere feeling he reached out his hand and stammered:

"You have done me ill once, but God has turned it to good, and now I say thanks for everything and beg the commissioner not to forget about the provision store and the commonwealth."

"I shall not forget that!" finished the commissioner and made a gesture for him to go.

After having collected himself for a moment he went down on the hill to search for the assistant, whom he found engaged in a fencing exercise with Miss Mary, whose wrist and upper arm he took great pains to render as flexible as necessary for a nice guard position.

The commissioner after having complimented them begged to apologize for having troubled them, but he must speak with the assistant about his lodging.

"There does not exist any vacant chamber on the whole skerry except the attic room over the ladies' rooms," said he with a daring, as though he had made every effort to find another.

"No, that won't do!" cried Miss Mary.

"Why not?" argued the commissioner. "What is the obstacle? There is only that room; in case Mr. Blom should have mine, then I must live in the same house as the ladies, and that would not do at all."

As there was no other choice, the matter was settled, and the assistant's baggage was carried up.

"Now to duty!" continued the commissioner, after it had become calm again. "The stromling have come, and in eight days the fishing will commence. Therefore the assistant must at once, preferably to-night, while this wind continues, go out and try the drifting nets, as he already knows how."

"May I go too?" begged Miss Mary, imitating a child's squeaking voice.

"Certainly you may do that, my angel," answered the commissioner, "if Mr. Blom has nothing against it. But you must excuse me that I leave you alone now, for I must write reports the whole night. At one o'clock you must be out. You can take the coffeepot with you."

"Oh, won't that be fun, such fun!" exulted the girl, who seemed to have become ten years younger.

"And now I go to order a boat equipped and get the nets ready. Look out and go to bed early to-night, so that you will not oversleep."

Therewith he went away, surprised over the incredulous surety, with which he forced his own will, since he had left an impossible defense and gone over to the offensive.

For the first time he entered the cottage of the hostile fisherman Oman.

He noticed at once that there was a coldness and repugnance, but he was so precise in his questions and orders, that everything bent before him. He threw in some kindly questions about the children; promised that there would soon be better times on the skerry, and he would undertake all the risk himself, threw in a word about the provision store, and reminded the people to keep barrels and salt in readiness, and if they had not the money to buy with, they could have it advanced. He left as a friend to all and must promise at once to send down some strong medicine to the father who had taken cold.

Thereafter he went down to the boat houses and selected nets with strong floats and strings. Examined the best boat, and ordered out two able boys.

When he had finished the preparatory work, the bell rang for supper in the ladies' cottage.

At the supper table he spoke with the mother, while the young people, as he now called them, were devouring each other with their eyes; squabbling and pushing, as if their bodies were irresistibly attracted towards each other.

"Should you leave the two alone like that?" whispered the mother to him, when he had said good night to retire.

"Why not? If I show myself dissatisfied, then I become ridiculous, and if I do not show dissatisfaction . . ."

"So you will be still more ridiculous!"

"Thus; in either case. It is immaterial consequently what stand I take! Good night, mama!"

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

It had rained for eight days after the first trial with the drifting nets, which had passed without other results than a little scene between the engaged pair. The commissioner, who very well knew that there were no fish to get, as he had purposely led the young folks astray, had gone down to the beach to receive the home-coming fishers and had then been called idiot by his betrothed, who was entirely worn out by being up all night. When the boatmen snickered at this secretly, the commissioner, who feared a storm, had come between with a joke. At the dinner table the sport at the new method of fishing had taken wider range, and the commissioner had played deep humiliation so that Mr. Blom had several times regarded it his duty to defend him in a manner extremely wounding.

The rainy days following this had kept the company in doors, whereby an extremely intimate intercourse had formed down in the ladies' cottage, where the assistant had introduced the habit of reading aloud from the Swedish poets. The com-

missioner had at the beginning listened to it, but finally left with the explanation that Swedish poesy was written for confirmation classes and ladies and that he would wait, until there came a poet, who would write for men. He had then by common vote been declared unpoetical, at which he was satisfied, as it relieved him from the duty of being present at the seances.

The rainy weather had caused even the work on the chapel to stop, and the laborers were sitting in the cottages and furnishing the gin to what coffee they could get.

The colporteur, who could not gather the people out on the slope, passed the first days in the kitchen and would have read out of the Bible, but was received with indifference and fell into dispute with the laborers, who were mostly free thinkers. Whereupon he had withdrawn to his chamber, explaining that he was sick and he sent to the commissioner for the china preparation, as his bottle was emptied. Suddenly he had disappeared and it was said that he had gone with a steamer to the city.

He had now returned, the evening before, to the skerry, accompanied by a man, whom he called his brother and who brought a boat load of divers articles, mostly beer, which was packed up in a boat house, in the open door of which a plank on two barrels served as a counter, as the common-

wealth had permitted the opening of a provision store.

During the past few days fishing folks had commenced to gather from the islands near the mainland. And now the boat houses were opened where whole families were harbored, the cottages were filled with relations and acquaintances, and on the whole skerry there was a life, which strangely contrasted with the usual solitude.

As the skerry and the fishing waters belonged to a private individual in on the mainland, every boat paid a certain duty which was collected by an overseer who was sent here. With this overseer the commissioner had at once got on a bad footing, when he would speak about fishing with drifting nets, which would be followed by the abandoning of the shoals, and thereby the water tax would cease. But even this apparently unfavorable circumstance he had known how to turn to his benefit; for the overseer, when opposing the new method, was urged to propagate the old system by means of gin and would thereby against his will form the dark background, against which the effects of fishing with drifting nets would stand out in bolder magnificence. And the commissioner was perfectly sure of his victory, as night and day he had been sampling the water, dredging, fishing, and with his water telescope investigating

the depths to find out where the shoals of fish were moving.

All these details, however, had no other interest to him, than that they served to exercise his energy for coming battles, to restore in him that feeling of power, without which nobody can endure, who has unusual abilities, which are easily lost, unless used.

And during the time, which had passed since the arrival of the assistant, the daily hectoring from the side of the young folks had by and by accustomed him to the rôle of an inferior, so that he was on the way to live this rôle himself, especially as he himself did not wish to break the engagement but found it necessary to cause the break to be made by her. Between the two young people there existed a complete sympathy on all subjects, and he had witnessed how the ripe woman was at once on a level with the unripe man, all of whose immature thoughts, all improvised notions she accepted as the height of wisdom. And each of his attempts to refute a stupidity stranded against their inability to keep together the threads of a discourse, because they were thinking exclusively under the influence of the desire to own each other. To take up some competition in acrobatic dexterity or praise of the lower sex he would not, for it was his exact purpose to be erased and make a capital end to the tie, which

threatened his whole future existence. And this biandri, in which he was living, when he, for an occasional moment alone with his betrothed, only received reflexes from the other man, felt, as it were, his spirit on her lips, heard his childishness reëchoed from her mouth, all this had ended in giving him loathing for a state, which reminded of a *menage à trois*.

The young man's conceit had no limit, and he had fallen into the ridiculous idea that he was superior to the commissioner, because he was *al pari* with Miss Mary, who also gave the illusion of being above the commissioner; according to the perfectly correct formula: if A is greater than B, and C is equal to A, then C is also greater than B,— without, however, first examining whether A really was greater than B.

He had never before expected to find youth's secret so openly exposed as he got it here gratuitously presented on a waiter, and how well he recognized himself from a past stage.

How had he not cried of hunger and rut? Experienced Weltschmerz of envy for elders, who had already gained what he was struggling for and who then made him feel dejected, whereby also his sympathy for all oppressed and small had been aroused. This inability to judge one's powers, based on anticipation of that, which it would be possible to accomplish in this long life, if

thought of as concentrated in a single act! All this sentimentality, caused only by unsatisfied desires. This over-estimating of woman, while memories from the nursery and of the mother were still fresh. These lax half-thoughts of the still soft brain under pressure from blood vessels and testicles.

He even recognized these faint signs of good sense, which under the form of primitive, animal slyness and discrimination of means so often believed themselves to be the highest prudence, but were only the fox's simple attempt to be shrewd, and which therefore wonderfully resembled the reputed women's artifice, priest shrewdness, and lawyers' trickery.

The young man had even tried mind reading on the commissioner, thereby betraying that he suspected the latter of carrying some dangerous secrets as he was unlike other beings. But in this he had acted so clumsily, that the commissioner had found out all that was thought and said about him by the ladies; instead of giving any information he had by his answers so mystified the young man, that he began to doubt whether his rival was a blockhead or of a demoniac nature. By demoniac he meant a conscious person, who under pretext of the greatest naïveté acted with full calculation, always awake and leading the fates of other beings according to his plans. And as the

idea of calculation, which was a virtue, always had a bad significance to the young, who could not calculate the consequences of an act, so his envy assumed the inferior's passionate desire to tear down and trample under the feet.

Thus matters stood, when the great day came that was to decide the fishermen's whole existence for the coming winter.

. . . . . .

The August evening was hanging bed warm over the skerry, all of whose cliffs and stones were still warm after the sun had gone down, so warm, that the dew could not fall on them. The sea outside spread itself smooth and lavender gray where the full moon copper red slowly emerged and was just now half hidden by a brig, which seemed to sail right on the satellite's *mare serenitatis*. Nearer the strand were seen all the floats of the laid out nets lying in rows like flocks of sea birds floating on the swell.

And while the people were awaiting the break of day to look at the nets, they had camped on the strands around campfires with coffeepots and gin bottles; in the boat house, where the provision dealer was selling beer, the preacher had taken place beside his brother to assist him with the lively traffic, and with a blue apron round his hips he was seen opening beer bottles like an old expert saloon keeper.

The commissioner, who had come out to observe the direction of the currents, the temperature and barometric pressure, now wandered on the sandy beach to rest from his thoughts. Here and there he surprised a couple, who had sought solitude. Their unintelligible naïveté in behavior made him only turn his back on them with a sneer and loathing. Coming further out on the point, he climbed out on the cliffs to find his seat, where he used to meditate. It was one of the arm chairs which had been perfectly polished by the waves, and was still warm as a stove from the burning sun of the day.

He had been sitting a moment half asleep lulled by the sighing of the surf, when he heard the sand creak below on the edge of the beach. There was a rustle in the dry wrack, and he saw the assistant and his betrothed coming slowly walking with their arms around each other's waist. They halted between the invisible beholder and the moonlight's street on the water, so that he could see their figures outlined as sharply, as though he had had them between the objective of a microscope and the reflecting mirror. And he saw now with antipathy's sharpened glance her profile like that of a bird of prey leaning towards the other's big ape's head with the enormous cheeks, useless to all but buglers, and the narrow tapering skull without a forehead.

He observed now the superfluous mass of flesh in the man's figure, whose ignoble outlines with too large hips reminded of a woman like the Farnesian Hercules. A manly ideal of the period of the semi-brutes, when the fist still ruled over the big brain, which was not completed.

Disgraced, as though he had been engaged to a centaur, he felt that his soul through marriage with a retrogressive type, was standing before the beginning of a crime, which, completed, would falsify his lineage for all time to come, which should allure him to offer his only life for another's child, on which he should squander his best feelings and, after a time grown fast to it, drag his humiliation as a block about his feet unable to free himself. Jealousy "this dirty vice," what else is it than the healthy, strong fear of the tribal instinct lest it should be hindered in its praiseworthy egotism to perpetuate the best in the individual? And who lacks in this sound passion but the sterile family sustainer, the wife panderer, the weak fool, the cicisbeo, the gynecolater, who believes in platonic love?

He was jealous, but when the first anger over the affront had subsided, there awoke an unrestrained desire to possess this woman without wedlock. The gauntlet was thrown, the liberty in choice was proclaimed, and he felt a desire to take up the battle, break the band and appear as

the lover in order that he with gained victory should be able to go calmly onwards, conscious that he was not the one who had been neglected by nature, who had been pushed aside in the battle of love. Here was no longer a question of honest contest with loyal means, it was an insidious battle between burglars. The challenger had selected the simple weapon, skeleton keys, and the combat was about stealing! With a woman as the prize all hesitation disappeared. The animal had awakened, and the wild instincts, which hid themselves under the great name of love, were as furious as the powers of nature let loose.

He arose from the rock unobserved and turned his steps homewards to arrange his fate, as he called it.

CHAPTER TWELFTH

THERE was a gloomy silence on the skerry about seven o'clock the next morning, for the fishing on the shoals had been a failure on account of the reasons stated by the commissioner. The fishermen were sitting dejectedly in their boats and straightening out their nets, and now and then picking out a solitary stromling, which was thrown on shore.

The traffic at the provision store had become less with the sinking credit, and the preacher had laid aside his blue apron and with book in hand had gathered a little group of despairing women around him in a cottage. With an incomprehensible, but not unusual, logic among his class he spoke of how Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. There was an approximate *à propos* for so far as this case was concerned there were many mouths and few fishes, but how these few fishes could fill so many, that he could not indicate. Now that there was no help, he must try and explain, why the miracle could not be done again, and he found the reason in the prevailing unbelief. If they only had faith

as a grain of mustard seed, the miracle would be repeated. And faith could only be gained by prayer.

Therefore he exhorted the community to pray.

Although none of those present believed in the miracle of the two fishes, while the most of them had never heard of it, because they had not read that story, they followed the example and repeated the Lord's Prayer, which they had learned passably for the first holy communion.

But when they were half through, they were suddenly disturbed by a noise from the harbor. Those who were sitting nearest the window now saw a fishing boat, which had just furled its mainsail, and come up to the pier. In the bow stood Miss Mary with fluttering hair beneath the blue Scotch cap, and at the tiller sat the assistant waving his hat as a sign of success. The boat was overloaded with nets, through the dark meshes of which glittered fish upon fish.

"Come here, you shall have stromling," cried the girl with the conqueror's munificence.

"If I am only permitted to measure them first, the people shall have them," interposed the commissioner, who from his window had observed the return of the boat and had therefore come down to see the result of his labors.

"What good will that do?" said Miss Mary over-bearingly.

"It is for the statistics, my gracious lady," answered the commissioner with no sign of discomposure, for he knew that the result of the fishing had depended upon the information he had given, founded on current, depth, temperature of the water and the condition of the bottom.

"You with your statistics," joked Miss Mary with an expression of deepest disgust.

"Take it, then, but only let me know afterwards how much there was," the commissioner finished the discussion with and went home.

"He is envious of us," remarked Miss Mary to the assistant.

"Perhaps jealous?" said he.

"That he surely cannot be," replied the girl half aloud as to herself, thereby betraying that which she had hidden for several days, namely her being provoked at her betrothed's incredible indifference towards his rival which she had taken as an offending over-confidence in his power to charm.

The prayer meeting had been broken up, and all the islanders gathered around the returned fishing boat.

"Yes, see Miss Mary, you are a perfect man!" flatteringly said the preacher, getting the chance of sowing a little seed of variance as he believed.

"A sitting crow gets nothing," joked the custom house surveyor.

"One who lies on his sofa, he means," whispered the assistant to Miss Mary.

The girl swelled at the praise, and distributed the fish with full hands to those who stood on the pier, who never tired of breaking forth in praise and blessings over the angel rescuer.

But it was not gratitude for benevolence received, which called forth this beautiful emotion, it was a hearty desire to evade confessing themselves wrong towards the commissioner, whose way of fishing they had joked about. It was the reverse side of a hatred towards their real benefactor, for whom they would not bow in gratitude.

When the fish was taken from the nets and distributed between the poorest, there proved to be ten barrels, which were at once bought by the provision dealer and salted down. The money was transferred at once into coffee, sugar and beer. For they felt sure they could take their own stromling for the winter out of the sea, since Miss Mary had given them all the information regarding the new way of fishing with drifting nets.

. . . . . .

When the commissioner reached his room, he found a letter, which had been brought by a coast guardsman returning home. It contained an invitation for the commissioner and his betrothed to honor the ball of the officers on board the

corvette *Loke,* which would anchor beside the skerry at eight o'clock of the same day.

He saw at once that the moment had come in which to make an end to the engagement, for now to take the mistress of another into society and introduce her as his future wife, naturally he would not. Therefore he pulled off his engagement ring, and put it in a letter, which he had composed the night before to the widow of the exchequer officer, and in which he with the strongest expressions of despair regretted that his engagement with Miss Mary must come to an end, because of a former liaison, which he had recklessly entered into with a woman, who had borne him children, and who now appeared with a lawful claim which, if it could not compel him into a marriage with the plaintiff, still had the power to prevent his union with another. As a gentleman, but without intending to offend, he explained that he was prepared to assist the innocently injured girl who was perhaps placed in distress, both as far as the saving of her honor and her subsistence were concerned.

This fiction he had found to be the only possible way to make a final ending, as it protected the honor of both parties, but mostly that of the girl, and must be irrevocable without the hope of reparation, being an inevitable fate.

When he had sealed the letter, he whistled to

his orderly, and gave it to him telling him to carry it to the widow of the officer of the exchequer.

Thereafter he lighted a cigarette and placed himself at the window to see how the shot would strike. On the porch stood the old lady shaking a mat, when the man stopped to deliver the letter. She received it with some astonishment, which increased, when she with her left hand squeezed the envelope to feel what it contained. Thereupon she turned round and went into the cottage.

A moment thereafter Miss Mary's figure was seen to move to and fro behind the lace curtains in the dining room. She seemed to walk vehemently backwards and forwards, sometimes stopping and gesticulating with her arms, as though she would defend herself against reproaches, which were thrown at her.

This lasted about an hour, after which she was seen out on the porch, throwing a revengeful glance up towards the commissioner's window. After which she beckoned to the assistant, who was coming from the harbor.

When they had both gone into the cottage and been invisible for half an hour, they appeared again and went into the woodshed, from whence they brought out a trunk and a knapsack.

So, they had considered it, and found that to tarry on the skerry longer was impossible.

After a moment the assistant again appeared,

this time carrying with him his own trunk, which the commissioner recognized by its trimmings of brass.

Thus he also intended to go.

Soon the owners of the cottage appeared with servants, and the whole house seemed to be turned upside down.

Towards noon, after the commissioner had passed away the time with reading, he saw the assistant and Miss Mary step out onto the porch, and engage in a lively conversation, which became more so and was followed by gestures, indicating a controversy.

"They must know each other pretty well, as they are quarreling already," thought the commissioner.

In the afternoon the old lady and the assistant were on the pilot's boat being taken out to an inward bound steamer. Why Miss Mary stayed, he could not understand clearly. Perhaps with the hope of a renewal, perhaps with a desire to show her spite or may be something else.

However, she placed herself at the window, so that she could be seen from the custom house cottage. And there she sat most of the time, sometimes drumming on the window pane, sometimes reading a book and now and then raising her handkerchief to her face.

About seven o'clock in the evening the corvette

was seen stealing from Landsort's passage and going to anchor at once between Norsten and East Skerries. When it signaled with the steam whistle for pilots, the girl arose and came out to see what was going on; and as she now stood on the slope, regarding the fine vessel, which was adorned for a feast with flags on all stays and with colored awnings amidships, the commissioner could see how she became fascinated by the alluring sight. She stood with her hands behind her back in an unbecoming attitude, until the wind brought to the skerry the tunes of a festival march, when her feet began to move on the spot. Slowly the slender body bent forwards, as if it was attracted by the tones of music, and then, at once, the whole figure collapsed, the hands covered the face and the girl rushed precipitately into the cottage, in despair like a child, who had lost an expected pleasure.

The commissioner now dressed for the ball; on the black dress coat with the doctor's insignia embroidered in black silk on the velvet collar, he hung his six decorations of knighthood on a chain and put on his bracelet, which he had not worn since the day of his engagement.

When he had finished his toilet and had still an hour left, before the boat would come for him, he decided to make a farewell visit to Miss Mary, mostly because he would not be suspected of cow-

ardice, but also because he was longing to test his power over his own feelings. As he came into the hall he made a noise to give the girl time to pose in order that he from this pose might learn the reason of her stay and what her intentions were.

After knocking he entered and found Miss Mary sitting with sewing work, something he had never seen in her hands before. Her face expressed humiliation, regret and submission, although with an effort to look indifferent and aristocratic.

"Will you see me, Miss Mary, or shall I go?" commenced the commissioner. And he felt again the inexplicable desire to lift her above himself as a woman, when she appeared with a woman's attributes and leaned towards him, just as he otherwise felt an irresistible desire to push her down, when she came with manly pretensions and manners. At this moment she seemed more beautiful to him than he had seen her for a long time, so that he gave way to his feelings, and without making resistance he became approachable.

"I have caused you grief, Miss Mary . . ."

When she heard the softness in his voice she at once straightened up and snapped:

"But you were too cowardly to come and tell me, yourself."

"Considerate, Miss Mary! It is not so easy

for me as it is for you to slap people's faces. And you see now, that I have the courage to show myself, as well as you to receive me."

The last was ambiguous, with the purpose of hearing whether she believed in his motive for breaking the engagement.

"Did you believe that I feared you?" asked she and took a stitch with her needle.

"I did not know how you would take my explanation, although I thought I knew that the sorrow which it might cause you would be easily consoled."

There lay something in the words "easily consoled," which seemed to cut the girl as an allusion to the young consoler, but neither of them seemed to have the desire to betray themselves; one feared to show jealousy, and the other was anxious to learn, if he had seen anything.

The girl, who had sat at her work, now looked up to read the expression in the face of her opponent and observed with a wonder which she could not hide the many orders on the lapel of his dress coat. And with a childish pettishness, which only hides envy, she sneered:

"How fine you are!"

"I shall be so at the ball!'

The girl's face twitched, twitched so terribly that the commissioner felt the reflection of her pain and took hold of her hand at the same mo-

ment that she broke out with a terrible cry. And when he leaned towards her, she drew her head towards his chest and cried, so that she shook as in a fever.

"Child!" the commissioner said soothingly.

"Yes, I am a child! Therefore you should have indulgence with me!" sobbed the girl.

"Listen! How far shall one have indulgence with a child?"

"Infinitely!"

"No! I have never heard that! There is a perfectly determined limit, where dissoluteness approaches criminal action."

"What do you mean?"

And now she jumped up.

"You know what I mean, I see that," answered the commissioner, who was again free from the enchantment, for as soon as she became hard, at the same moment she became ugly.

"Jealous, thus!" sneered the girl, who believed she had caught him.

"No, for jealousy is an uncalled for suspicion, sometimes a measure of prudence, but my apprehensions have proved to be well founded. Therefore I am not jealous!"

"And of a boy! A whelp, that you are standing so far above," continued the girl without taking the explanation into consideration.

"So much the more ignominious for yourself!"

"Thus the whole story was a falsehood," she threw between to escape being hit by the affront.

"From beginning to end! But I would not cause your mother sorrow and yourself shame! Do you understand the delicacy?"

"Yes, I understand it! But I do not understand myself!"

"That I should be able to do, if you gave me a part of your past life!"

"My past life! What do you mean?"

"There exists then a past in your life! It was this I always suspected."

"You allow yourself to make insinuations . . ."

"As I have nothing further to do, with who you are or what you have been, so . . . Now I must say farewell!" the commissioner broke off, as he saw a gunner out on the hill coming for him.

"Don't go away yet!" begged the girl and grasped his hand, looking into his eyes with drowning glances. "Do not go away, for then I do not know what I might do."

"Why torment ourselves longer, when separation is inevitable?"

"We will not torment ourselves! You shall stay with me this evening, so that we can talk before we separate; I will narrate to you all that

you wish to know, and after that you will judge me differently."

The commissioner, who from this utterance believed he knew all and was sure that he had escaped the misfortune of binding himself to the mistress of one or more, now came to a decision. He went to the window, and dismissed the gunner, saying that he would come later in his own boat.

When this was done, he sat down on the sofa for the starting of a conversation.

But after the girl was relieved of her uneasiness, she relaxed and became almost speechless, so that finally there was perfect silence. They had nothing to say to each other, and the fear of stirring up storm birds oppressed more and more the feelings, so that tiresomeness faced them.

The commissioner began to thumb the books, which were left on the center table, and caught sight of one on which the assistant's name was written.

"The story of a young woman, I believe! Have you read it?" asked he.

"No, I haven't had time yet. What is there about the book?"

"Well, it is remarkable because it was written by a woman and yet is sincere."

"So! What is its contents then?"

"Its contents are about free love. There is

a young scientist, who becomes engaged to a girl free from prejudice; and while he is on an expedition, she lends herself to an artist, while expecting later to marry her betrothed."

"So? What does the authoress say about that?"

"She only laughs at that, of course."

"Fie!" said the girl and rose to go after a bottle of wine.

"Why so? No right of ownership in love! And, besides, her betrothed was tiresome, at least in her company, to judge by the delineation in the book."

"Now we are beginning to be tiresome, also," interrupted Miss Mary, as she filled the glasses.

"What shall we amuse ourselves with then?" asked the lover with an amorous smile, which could not be misunderstood. "Come now and sit down here by me."

Instead of being offended at the coarse tone and gesture, which accompanied the invitation, the girl seemed to look up to the man with a certain admiration where before she had almost despised him for his over-respectful manners.

The twilight had fallen, and the moon in its last quarter threw only a yellow-green stripe in onto the floor, silhouetting the shadow of the balsam.

Through the open window came the subdued

tones of the first waltz, " The Queen of the Ball," as a reproach, a greeting from the lost Paradise, and at the same time sustained the hope that all was not ended.

And in the hope of binding him by a memory of the highest bliss she made the last concession after a stormy explanation of love on his side.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

THREE days later the commissioner landed on East Skerries after having been to Dalaro. When he learned that the young lady had left never to return, he felt an inexpressible easiness, as though the air was rarefied and purer. Going up to his room, he rested before the open window to smoke, and in memory pass through the changeful sensations of the past days.

When he at midnight had torn himself from the girl's embrace, he had placed himself in the boat with a certain satisfaction; as though he had fulfilled a pressing duty. It was now as though the equilibrium had been replaced. His rights had been violated in such a case, where the law did not give redress, and therefore he must procure right for himself, and he had acted only upon the principles which the opponents themselves had promulgated.

Afterwards when he had gone aboard the corvette and met people, with whom he could converse in a cultured language, and had discussed with the surgeon learned subjects, it at first acted as an intoxicant. He did not need to suppress

his brain for childish talk, nor make himself semi-stupid in order to be understood; and when he only expressed himself by inference or with hints, he was understood at once. Then he felt that he had been living three months in barbarism, which by and by had imperceptibly drawn him down into trifling battles, which had placed his thought life beneath the effective and vegetative; had elevated the act of reproduction to be the main thing, and allured him to enter as a competitor in a strife as between stallions, from which very likely he would have come out victorious. And so he understood why the guardians of the universal Christian church, who were sent to carry civilization out to the savages of all nations, were once forbidden to found a family, or to bind themselves to woman or children, and he understood that there could lay a rational significance in fasting and renunciation, for those who would live a higher spiritual life. It was not for self-gratification that the anchorite sought solitude, for just as when dropped at random on fallow ground, the solitary grain of wheat could raise sixty spears, while that in the wheat field only gave two, where the seed was crowded between millions on fertilized ground, so could that individual, who struggled for a richer development over others, only grow in the desert.

Three days' experience had corroborated this, for when he on board the corvette and at the bathing resort was dragged from circle to circle, he had observed every night when he went to bed, that during the course of the day he had ground off his edges, whereby he had, like a precious stone, gained in appearance but lost in carats. This subserviency, developed by common sympathy for the human being and by the tendency of adaption in society had deluded him to such a degree, that the opinions which he had improvised in society stuck to him and were subsequently recollected by him with the claim of being his innermost thoughts. And he had finally become loath and felt himself at last a false being, who said one thing and thought another; he began to blush for himeslf and observed that with increasing esteem he gained in society for his affable manners, he lost all esteem for himself.

To avoid sinking he isolated himself again, and the regained solitude acted upon his spirit as a steam bath, or a swim in the sea, where liberty from all pressure, all contact with solid material had ceased; and he decided to stay on the skerry through the winter.

For this purpose he rented for his own use the cottage, where the ladies had dwelt, and began to install himself the same day. The one big room

he took for a library and laboratory, the other for dining room and parlor; the attic he fixed up for a bedroom.

When he awoke the next morning in his new domicile, after a dreamless sleep, he found a new pleasure in having a house alone to himself, where he need not have forced upon him suggestions from others, nor receive other impressions than those he himself determined on.

When he had drunk his coffee, he sat down in the library, after having given orders that he would not receive visitors before three o'clock in the afternoon.

Now he took up an old plan of exploring Europe's present ethnography, in a way that would save all useless travel. On printed circulars, issued in a fictitious name, he now filled in the addresses, and professional titles and put them into stamped envelopes. To get the most complete record of the measurements of the craniums and the dimensions of the body he had decided that circulars sent to hat makers, makers of coffins, shirt and hosiery manufacturers in Europe's principal cities asking for information as to the sizes mostly called for in the respective countries, would procure for him the desired results. The circulars pretended to be issued with the view of exportation of said stuffs at wholesale with high profits. In addition to this another circular was

sent to the great as well as the smaller book dealers in the capitals of Europe and other cities, with a request for photographs of all kinds. These were to be paid for in advance at the highest price by postal order. He also placed himself in communication with a technicist, who bought photographs to utilize the silver in them. With this and the thousand of portraits, which he had cut out of foreign illustrated papers, he intended to commence his explorations.

When he had finished this work, it was dinner time. He went out of doors to eat it, and he observed that a letter was in the mail box on the door. The writing was familiar to him, and when he had assured himself it was from Miss Mary, he did not open it, he let it lay beside him on the table; meantime he ate his simple dinner in great haste. That the letter did not contain anything agreeable, that he understood as he had broken his promise to come back the next day to say good-by, and now because he would save himself all disagreeable impressions he laid the letter aside in the table drawer without opening it.

But when he had slept an hour after his dinner and the heat from labor and food had disappeared, he observed, that his thoughts did not turn to books, they turned towards that table drawer. And now he began to wander up and down the floor, the prey of vehement and fatiguing battle.

It was as though he had a part of her soul locked up in this drawer; she existed in the room, and the spirit of her power of attraction lay under the white envelope, on which a red seal lightened as a kiss. He saw her sitting there on the same sofa, heard her whisperings, felt her eyes glowing in the dusk, and his flesh began to burn again. How stupid, he thought, to let life's highest bliss go out of one's hands. When love was a mutual deceit, why not deceive then! Nothing for nothing! And when a perfect happiness did not exist, why then not be content with the imperfect?

Now he felt that he would have crawled to her, lied that he was her slave and acknowledged himself vanquished. He could have frightened away the rival; and with her alone in perfect union it would have been easy to have bound her with the band of habit and interest, and finally she would not take the enjoyment from someone else.

But so came the fear, that this letter would disperse his last hope, which still was better than nothing, and he would not read it. He had placed himself at his laboratory table, and almost without thinking of what he did, he opened an iron retort, put in the letter and lit the blast lamp under it. After a moment the smoke puffed out through the neck of the retort, and when it ceased he lighted the gas with a match. A little blue-yel-

low flame burned for a few minutes with a whistling sound like a bat's cry.

The spirit of the letter, as an alchemist would have said! A mass of paper which was consumed and gave the same products of combustion, carbon and hydrogen, as a burning soul in a living body. Carbon and hydrogen! It was all, and the same!

The flame fluttered, decreased, disappeared in the neck, and it was dark again in the room!

It had again grown cloudy out over the sea, and the waves were going before the east wind, beating towards the strand, sighing, hissing, and the wind split at the corners like the waves against the stem of a boat; but through all these sounds of lamentation was heard the whistling buoy's crying out on the sea, rhythmetic as a tragic comedian, when he recites, and with pauses, just as though to recover his breath or let the last word die out; before he lets a new one stream forth. It was a solo for Titan with the storm for an accompaniment, a giant organ, where the east wind tread the bellows.

The room became too sultry for him, and he took his cloak to go out into the storm and let his mood blow away. Attracted against his will by the light of a lantern in the provision store, he steered his steps thither. As the fishing with drifting nets had been remunerative, the store had a lively patronage, and hidden by darkness he

could come close to the talking fishermen without being seen.

"And so the assistant swiped the girl from him," said old Oman; "and so she got a real man instead of that one . . ."

"Yes, he is not as a human being should be," threw in the unmarried Vestman, "for to-day he wrote as good as hundreds of letters for the mail. And what he is boiling in there and is busy with, no mortal can tell, but I think, what I think! And we must have our eyes open, for such ones as lock themselves in and boil, we know them."

"Oh, the devil!" the married Vestman followed with. "Let him brew his drop himself; it cannot turn out worse with him than old Soderlund, who mashed out on the rocks and lost his still! This here I think we won't meddle with."

"Yes, if it is only that," replied Oman, "then let him go on with it, but see I never can forget that he would have taken the net from me that time, and if I catch him by the fin, I don't let him slip until I have him in the cauf . . ."

"Yes, a wicked man is he who has no God!" ended the colporteur. "That is sure!"

Without having the slightest trace of an illusion in regard to their thankfulness, the commissioner could not help feeling an uneasiness at being surrounded in the desert by downright enemies and the most dangerous of the dangerous,

who believed that they saw in him an idiot or a criminal. They believed that he was distilling gin to save twenty cents on a gallon! They suspected him of mixing poisons for them. If any misfortunes happened here, he would be blamed for it. And if they used their unlawful nets, he would not dare to seize them without himself dreading a more or less scandalous charge, or something worse than that — their revenge.

It was a dangerous company, dangerous to life as stupidity. And although he knew that at any moment he would he could gain all of them for his friends, if he treated them to a gallon of gin and stayed with them himself and helped drink it, he never thought to do this for one moment. Their enmity kept him free; their friendship would have dragged him down into their filth. Their hate could only act as an annunciator for his power, but their affections would have neutralized it, even if their spirits never could enter into contact with his. And the very danger had its pleasure, because it kept his spirit awake and elastic, gave him something to counteract, for exercise. Besides the danger out here among these savages was not less than that in the upper circles, which he had lately left, and where the power to do real harm was greater. Had not the surgeon on board the corvette regarded him as sick, when he spoke of the necessity of finding a method to utilize the

enormous quantity of nitrous oxide, which was wasted in the manufacture of commercial sulphuric acid, while at the same time the expensive saltpeter is imported from Chile to compensate for the soil's losses of nitrogen. Or when he projected something about utilizing the smoke from the chimneys for technical purposes, had not this friend advised him to take a sojourn at a watering place and reside among human beings.

Rather stay in absolute solitude and pass for an idiot among redskins than be condemned to a civil death by equals with authority and decision without appeal.

After he had wandered a moment in the darkness, he returned to his cottage and lighted the candles and lamps in his two rooms and opened the doors onto the porch, whereby he lessened the impression of being locked in.

When he now looked at his watch it was only eight o'clock. The long evening and night which were coming frightened him, for his head was too tired to work, but not sufficiently so to enable him to sleep. The wind blew fiercely round the house corners, the din of the waves and the roaring of the whistling buoy made him nervous. To free himself from the suggestions of these sounds, to which he would not be a slave, he placed in " sleeping bullets " which were small steel balls he had bought in Germany, which when placed in the ears,

prevented every sound from penetrating and being perceived.

But when he thus had shut off perhaps the greatest line of communication with the outer world, his fantasy began to labor at a higher pressure. A mad curiosity to know what the burned letter could have contained, gripped him irresistibly, so that he opened the retort to try to read in the ashes. But even the ink was destroyed by fire, and there was no trace to be seen of the writing. Now the field was open for all kinds of doubts and guesses. Sometimes he believed he could draw conclusions as to what the letter had contained from all that had passed, sometimes he rejected this, remembering the girl's illogical way to think and act.

So finally he stopped at the decision that it was impossible to reason it out, and he decided not to worry over it any more. But his brain had become unrestrainable and was worrying on its own account, grinding and sifting, until he became completely exhausted, without being able to sleep. And with the increasing feebleness in the organ of thought the lower propensities awoke.

Enraged that his soul could not hold out in the battle with a fragile body, he finally undressed and took a dose of potassium bromide, and at once the brain stopped in its wild career, fantasies banished, the consciousness was stunned, and he fell asleep as heavily as though dead.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

THE autumn had advanced, but on the skerry could not be seen that the summer had gone, for there was not a deciduous tree to turn yellow, and the lichens on the rocks had become more luxuriant, and swelled by the moisture, the heath and the crowberry vines had taken on a new verdure, the juniper and the dwarf pines, the eternally green trees of the north, were freshened and freed from dust by rain.

The fishermen had flown, as their labor for the fall was ended; the silence had again returned, and the provision store was closed. The wooden frame of the chapel became more naked, as the boards had been picked off for firewood and carpenter's lumber, so that there was only the studdings to be seen, which resembled a complex of gibbets.

The preacher was seldom seen now, for since he had become an abstainer, he had misused the china wine, which was a compound containing brandy, and he already had buzzings in his ears, palpitation of the heart and was sleeping most of the time.

The commissioner after a month of labor had succeeded in curing his soul of the shot wound he had received at the game of love. With potassium iodide and low diet he had subdued the desires, and when the tristesse of the solitude took him, he generated a portion of laughing gas from ammonium nitrate, for he had found a long time previous that intoxication from alcohol was vile and succeeded by greater dejection with mania for suicide. At first the wonderous nitrous oxide had cheered him up and made him laugh, but the banal giggle had dissolved all his great thoughts and struggles into a nothing, at which he laughed, but when he had found himself down among the gigglers, who had giggled at him, he felt the need of raising himself up again above his former self, and he missed his sorrows and his griefs.

But when he had isolated himself completely, so that the chambermaid was only permitted to clean the room and bring in food, while he locked himself up in the attic room, all the memories from the summer commenced to haunt him. He remembered now without wishing it, every word that had been said. And now the appearance of the preacher in the mist on the islet appeared as something that had been planned. The words which he had uttered concerning his father and his circumstances compared with those of Miss Mary, that she knew who he was, now took root, grew

and became big. There must exist some secret in his life, which everybody knew except himself. And soon he saw in the appearance of the preacher that of a planned spying, sustained by someone who wished to persecute him. He did not believe this in calmer moments, for he knew very well that the mania of persecution was the first symptom of that infirmity, which accompanies isolation. Human beings formed a great electrical battery of many elements, and when an element is isolated, it loses its power. The induction coil of copper wire was lame at the same moment the soft iron rod was taken out, and he was on the way to be lame, since his iron rod had become tempered steel.

Yes, but that was not that sickly mania of persecution, which comes from bodily infirmity, for he had in fact been persecuted, opposed from the very moment, that he in the school bespoke that he would be a power, a former of a species, that would be able to break from its kindred and like the differentiating herb beget for itself a name of its own, perhaps the name of a new genus. He had been persecuted, instinctively from below by inferiors and above by the mediocre, which latter sat as gauges and determined the standard, by which greatness should be judged. He had been hated and picked at as the yellow high-bred bird of the Canary islands, when it had flown out of

its cage and come among green-finches out in the forest, where its too splendid attire provoked the wild birds.

But nature, in which he had sought company before, now became dead to him, for the intermediary, the human being, was wanting. The sea, which he had worshiped and which he sought as the only grandeur in his paltry country with its petty, trivial summer cottage landscapes seemed to him to become narrow, as his ego swelled. This blue, turpentine-green, gray circle enclosed him as a prison yard, and the uniformity of the little landscape brought the same pain, as prison cells might cause, by their want of variety. To travel away from the whole he could not, for he sat with his roots in the earth, in his little impressions, his diet, and he could not be removed with the root. It was the Norseman's tragic, which uttered itself in longing for the south.

It was then that he commenced to think out a plan for connecting the country, the island country, — for that it had a connection by Lapland did not change the case — with the mainland. First there should be a six hours' lightning train to Helsingborg and communication with a steam ferry boat across the sound making the capital of Denmark the center of the North. Ice free harbors on Djuro and Nynas with ice breakers should keep commerce and navigation alive the whole year

round; the northern winter sleep would thereby be retrenched, and the national character, unsteadiness, which is said to be owing to that six months interruption of all activity, should change nature. The Russian commerce to England should go through Stockholm and Gothenborg, and the old scheme of Charles XI and Charles XII, to get the Persia and India trade over Russia and Sweden would be realized.

Sweden should become a country for tourists, and foreigners would be allured to her. He would change Stockholm to a seaport by closing the lake Malar at the North Bridge and the Sluice, and give it another outlet through a system of canals leading to the cove of Trosa. Thereby the salt water would come up to Stockholm, which would change the atmosphere conditions and consesequently the inhabitants.

But he remembered the time when Sweden, still belonging to the great, universal Christian church, stood in direct communication with Rome and thereby was of some account to Europe. He would, if it was shown that religion could not be abandoned by the multitude, again introduce this our forefathers' faith, which we with fire and sword had been urged to abjure, and whose martyrs, Hans Brask, Olaus and Johannes Magnus, Nils Dacke, and Ture Jonsson have become so shamefully soiled in history. And Catholicism,

the Roman legacy, the first promulgator of the idea of Europeism had conquered all Europe. Bismarck had fallen in the combat of culture, gone to Canossa and selected the Pope for an arbitrator, as he had commenced to believe in arbitrations without steel cannons. Denmark had built Catholic cathedrals, and the young Danes had already lent their pens to the cause. The germanization of the North like that of North Germany was only a relapse into barbarism after the Hun battles of 1870 the consequences of which have become manifest in persecution against Latin, and in French hate, which is uttered in wars of extermination against French literature, in North Germany family politics and Lutheran inquisition with prisons for heretics and a general lowering of the level of intelligence.

Lutherism, that was the foe! Teutonic culture; bourgeois religion in black pants, sectaristic narrowness, particularism, sundering, intrenchment and spiritual death!

No, Europe should be one again, and the peoples' way be over Rome, the way of intelligence over Paris!

The Swedish peasant should again feel himself as cosmopolitan and leave his position in the under class, again get that glimpse of the culture of beauty which the church formerly offered in pictures and tunes; his divine service should be a

true hymn in the Roman language, composed by poets, and not compounded by hymn book makers and of which he should understand exactly as little, as would awaken his highest ideas about that which he nevertheless would not comprehend. His high mass should be performed by real ministers, who devoted their life to religion and the care of souls, and not to agriculture, dairy business, whist playing and office work; and then the peasant's wife would get a guardian of her soul, to whom she at confession could intrust her sorrows instead of running into the kitchen of the parsonage and gossiping about it to the servants.

And with the re-installment of Latin every Upsala student's dissertation could be read as of old by the learned of Europe and every Swedish investigator feel himself a member of the great universal corporation of the intelligence under the pontificate in Paris.

This and other thoughts he put down on paper and laid it in the table drawer, for he had not a newspaper, that would print them, least of all the patriots who "from envy had no desire to receive projects for the elevation of the country."

He had now got the answers to his circulars and had the attic room filled with materials for his European ethnography. But now the subject had lost its interest, and his soul had become sick in earnest, so that he did not even dare go out. The

aspect of a human being awoke such a loathing, that he turned back home, if he only saw one. At the same time grew the contemporary need of hearing his own voice and to unload his over-productive brain by contact with another being, to feel himself exerting influence on the life of others and to have company. He had thought for a moment to get a dog, but to lay down deposits from his soul and his feelings in an animal body was to graft grapes onto thistles and he had never been allured by the sympathy of dirty, food courting animals.

There was only one man for whom he felt a certain attraction, and that was the married man of the custom house, Vestman, whose wife was living in bigamy, without her husband's knowing it. He had an honest look and an awakened intellect, and with him the commissioner had bound the companionship by presenting him with a salmon trawl with hooks. He had at the beginning of the summer lent him books and taught him how to write after a copy, but since the fishing had been in force and navigation had become lively, their paths had separated.

But in order to get the man to really place out the trawl the commissioner would not tell him that it was for salmon, for then the conservative fisherman would never concern himself with what was according to his idea an absurd exploit without re-

ward; therefore he was left in the belief that the question was about a new remunerative cod fishing; where the biggest fishes should be caught.

When the commissioner now after a month of isolation rowed out on the sea with Vestman and he heard his own voice again, he observed that from lack of use it had changed its tone and become thinner, so that he fancied he heard a stranger talk. And now he intoxicated himself with talking. His brain, which had only labored and produced by hand and pen, broke now through the sluices of the windpipe, and all his thoughts flowed out as in a stream, giving new births on the way, and when he had got the chance to speak to a human being's ear for a sounding board without being interrupted, without being questioned, it was to him as though he had a comprehending listener before him. And after their first outing he felt sure that Vestman was the most intelligent person he had met for a long time.

Now he kept on for eight days and narrated during their excursions about all the secrets of nature, explained the influence of the moon on the surface of the water, and warned him not to believe that all that the eyes saw was as it looked to be. Narrated, for example, that the moon was pear shaped, although it looked like a bowl, and that one, therefore, had no surety that the earth was ball shaped . . .

Here Vestman made a face and dared to raise an objection for the first time.

"Yes, but it says so in my almanac anyhow."

The commissioner found that he had gone out too far and must return, but it was too late, because to give a demonstration of the latest investigations regarding the shape of the earth as being a three axled ellipsoid, required knowledge in the listener, and therefore he must change to another subject. He spoke of the mirage and used the occasion to ask if they had visited Sword Island and seen what he had done there.

"Surely we have seen that something has been going on there, but nobody lands there more, and both the draughting of nets and the pasturing of sheep are spoiled," answered Vestman perfectly in accordance with truth.

After this confession the commissioner drew back, ashamed at having been the victim of the delusion that his listener had understood what he said. He had spoken against a wall and taken his own echo for the other's voice.

. . . . . .

Eight days later there was a great stir on the skerry, for Vestman had caught a salmon of twenty-six pounds. And as he believed he was the discoverer of this method of fishing, there was soon a notice in the newspaper about a new livelihood for fishermen, now that the stromling had be-

gun to decrease. The happy fisherman, Eric Vestman of the custom house service, had thereby made himself deserving of the esteem and gratitude of his fellow citizens . . .

Shortly afterwards there occurred in a periodical for the people a defamatory article about fish commissioners, who understand nothing, but believe they have everything to teach.

Hereafter a writing soon followed from the Academy of Agriculture to the commissioner with the request for a complete report of the management of the fishing, especially the salmon fishing, to which the commissioner only answered by handing in his resignation.

Without further interest for the population and without that little support, which his former official position had given him, he soon learned how the savages, who thought that he had "been discharged," commenced a perfect war of extermination against him. First they began to cast his boat loose, under the pretense that there was no place on the bridge, and it drifted to land and was broken to pieces.

During the next rainy weather he observed, that the rain came into the attic room. And after he had complained to Oman it began to rain into the other rooms, without his discovering a failing rooftile.

Shortly after this, one night, a burglary occurred

in the cellar, and the offenders were said to be Esthonians.

That their purpose was to drive him away was perfectly clear, but now it amused him to defy them, and this he did by not making any further remarks, and bearing everything.

But now when he was surrounded by real enemies and had in earnest stepped out of the community, the fear of the banished came over him with double force.

He slept poorly nights, notwithstanding he sought to regulate his dreams by giving himself strong suggestions before sleeping. But when he awoke, he had dreamed that he was a whistling buoy that had torn lose, and drifted and drifted seeking a strand upon which to be thrown. And in his sleep he had unconsciously sought support against the sideboard of the bed to feel contact with some object, even if a dead one. Sometimes he dreamed, that he fluttered in the air and could neither go up nor down; and when he finally awoke after a fainting attack he had grasped his hands round the pillow on which he had lain his head. Now the memory of his dead mother began to come up, and he awoke often from dreaming that he had lain as a child on her breast. His soul was plainly in retrogression, and the memory of the mother the source, the link between unconscious and conscious life, the consoler, the inter-

ceder, came forth. Childhood's thoughts of meeting again in another world came up, and his first plan of suicide expressed itself as an irresistible longing to find again his mother somewhere in another world, which he did not believe in.

All science was useless to a spirit going downwards, and which had lost all interest in life; the brain had battled, until tired, and the fantasy labored without a regulator.

Still he kept up until it was near Christmas; but he ate little and took only ether at night. The whole life disgusted him, and he smiled now at his former ambitions. The rain had destroyed his books and papers; the apparatus had corroded and rusted.

The care of his own person had lessened, so that his whiskers had grown, his hair remained unkempt, and he shunned water. He had not sent his linen to be laundried for a long time, and he had lost the ability to see dirt.

His clothes lacked buttons, and his coat was always spotted in front from things spilt, for the hand that managed knife and fork no longer obeyed the will.

When he went out sometimes, the children stood and made faces at him and called him nicknames.

One morning he had the whole swarm of children around him. They pulled his coat, and when he turned back, a stone was thrown, which hit

his chin so that the blood ran. Then he began to weep and begged them not to be cross with him.

"Yes, you shall go away, you devilish fool," cried a boy of twelve years, "lest we shall get you to the almshouse."

And so they all threw stones. But then Oman's maid came out and took the boy by the hair, and when she had chastised him, she went to the assailed and wiped the blood from his face with her apron.

"Poor little man!" said she.

Then he leaned his head towards her full bosom and said:

"I will sleep with you."

"Oh, shame!" snubbed the maid and pushed him away from her.

He replied, "How coarse your thoughts are! Fie!"

One evening some days later Vestman's maid ran down and begged the Doctor to come up and see Vestman's wife, who was dying. The request seemed somewhat unexpected to the commissioner, but with the clear-sightedness which during intervals of light accompanied his sickness, he perceived that here a murder had been committed and that they would use his name and title instead of a legal medical examination. The case was immaterial to him, but it aroused him for a moment. Something had happened, and the unusual had

made a long needed impression. He therefore went up to the custom house cottage and was received by both brothers, who showed him into the sick room with a politeness, which seemed to the commissioner extremely suspicious. But he said nothing, asked nothing, for he would draw out the vague confession by constraining the husband to speak first, sure that he would betray himself at the first word.

By a tallow candle sat the child eating a cookie, which had not been given her without an object, and she was dressed in her best clothes, probably so that she should feel solemn and appear in a constrained manner.

After the commissioner had looked around the room and observed that Vestman's brother had sneaked out, he stepped up to the bed where the woman lay.

He saw at once that she was dead, and by the contracted muscles of her face he understood that some violence had been committed, and when he also observed that her hair was carefully combed over the top of her head, he understood at once that the old, good way with the nail had been used.

But he would have the man speak first, and with half open lips and questioning eyes, just as though he would ask something, he turned to Vestman. This at once put him off his guard, and relying,

that he need no longer be sly with one who was insane, he said:

"Can't the Doctor testify that she is gone, so that we shall be permitted to bury her at once, for you see, we poor cannot afford to call a physician out here."

More was not needed to give half a surety. But instead of answering the commissioner turned half whispering towards the man who was perfectly calm after he had delivered his errand:

"Where is the hammer?"

At first the man flew backwards two steps, as if he would strangle his opponent, who still disarmed him by casting a glance at the girl, after which the husband stood still shivering.

"You do not know where the hammer is, but I know where the nail is driven," the commissioner continued with an immovable calm. "Over prudent asses, who cannot invent anything new, and like children always hide on the same place, when they play goal. I am convinced that this nailing the brain was invented by a nobleman or a priest during the Middle Ages and has now sunk down to the under class, where it is dug up as a sample of the peoples' craftiness. Everything comes from above, salmon, arsenic, nails, accidental shootings, revolutions, personal liberty, financial well being, ballads, folk-lore, farmers' almanacs, anthropological museums, but they are first stolen, for you

mob prefer to steal rather than take a gift, for you are too paltry to be willing to give thanks. And therefore you place your benefactors in an asylum, and your noblemen on the scaffold. Place me now in an asylum, and you will escape prison!"

Coming down to the cottage he remembered that the pleasure of speaking what he thought had allured him to an imprudent act, and with knowledge of the peoples' character he knew that self-defense against a dangerous witness might determine the murderer to put him to silence. He slept, therefore, during the night with a revolver in the bed and was awakened by bad dreams.

The following day he remained locked in and saw how white sheets hung at the windows in the custom house cottage. The third day the body was brought out and taken away on a boat, and the fourth day the men came back again. He did not sleep any more now, and insomnia completed the work of destruction. The fear of becoming insane and being placed in an asylum, mixed with the apprehension of being assassinated at any time, confirmed his decision to step out of life voluntarily. Now, when death approached and the end of life, of a family, stood forth in its gloom, it was as though the propensity of generation sprang up, and found utterance in the longing to own a child. But to go the whole trite way to search for a woman, and bind himself by family to the earth

and community, was against him more than ever, and in his frail, torn condition he speculated out a shorter way, which would give him family pleasure, if only for a few hours.

In a roundabout way, at which his sense of delicacy would have revolted a few months before, he procured after some waiting the seed of a human being, and then he constructed a *couveuse,* under the microscope which could be kept at a temperature from thirty-six to forty-one degrees Celsius. When fecundation had taken place, he saw how the males were swarming round the immovable female, which he imagined he saw blushing. And now they crowded, pushed, whipped each other in the battle to give impetus to a generation to propagate his talents, inoculating his rich, productive spirit on a buxom, rank, wild substratum. But it was not the largest, those with big, stupid heads and thick tails, it was the quickest, the agile, the most fiery, who first penetrated the membrane to push into the nucleus.

With the screw of the alcohol lamp under his thumb and one eye on the thermometer he looked at this unveiled mystery of love for a couple of hours. Saw, how the cells commenced to cleave, how the division of labor between the different segments had already taken place and he waited with uneasiness for the anterior end of the medullary tube to swell into a bulb, which

would constitute the primary brain; he dreamed that he could see this forge of thought arching beautifully, and he felt for a moment a pride at his creation, which solved the problem of Homunculus, when a movement on the screw of the lamp caused the white of the egg to coagulate and the spark of life to be extinguished.

He had lived so intensely this other being's life during these moments, that now, when he saw the round, dull, white spot on the glass, it was to him, as if he beheld the sunken eye of death, and magnified in his sickly senses the grief grew to sorrow, the sorrow over his dead child: the band between this and the future was severed, and he no longer had power to do it over.

When he awoke and came to his senses, he felt a strong warm hand grasping his right hand, and he remembered having dreamed, how he was a stranded vessel, which was tossed on the waves between sky and water, until he finally felt the anchor chain pulling and perceived a calm, as if again bound to firm earth.

Without looking up he pressed the firm hand to feel the attachment with a living being, and he imagined that he observed, how powers were transferred to him through the frailer nerve currents fastening onto the stronger.

" How is it with you? " he heard the preacher's voice above his head.

"If thou wert a woman instead, I should live again, for woman is man's root in the earth," answered the sick man, using thou for the first time to his old comrade.

"Thank fortune, that you have lost the rotten root!"

"Without root we cannot grow and bloom."

"But with such a woman, Borg!"

"Such a one? Do you know who she was? I have never found out."

"Yes, then you only need to know, that she was such a one, that a man never marries. But now she is engaged anyhow . . ."

"To him?"

"To him! It was in yesterday's paper."

After a moment's silence the preacher would arise and go, but the sick man held him fast.

"Tell me a fairy tale," said he in a childish, touching voice.

"Hm! A fairy tale?"

"Yes, a fairy tale! About sprites, for example. Do this, I beg of you!"

The preacher sat down again, and when he saw that the sick man was in earnest, he let him have his way and narrated.

The commissioner listened with the greatest attention, but when the preacher, faithful to his habit, would give some moral erudition, he was

interrupted by the sick man, who begged him to keep to the text.

"It is so good to hear old tales," said he; "it is like rest and to sink back into best memories of the time, when one was a little animal and loved the useless, the nonsensical, the meaningless. Repeat the Lord's Prayer for me now!"

"You don't believe in the Lord's Prayer?"

"No, not more than in the fairy tales: but it will do just as much good anyhow and when death approaches and one is going back again, one loves the old and becomes conservative. Repeat the Lord's Prayer. You shall have what I leave and your note back, if you repeat it."

The preacher hesitated a moment. Then he began to read.

The sick man at first listened quietly, afterwards his lips followed the sound in motion and finally spoke aloud and with a prayerful tone.

When they had finished, the colporteur said:

"It is good to pray, I believe!"

"It is like medicine. The words, the old words, awake memories and give powers, the same powers as they formerly gave to the powerless, who sought God outside himself. Do you know what God is? It is Archimedes wishing for a fixed point outside, by the support of which he could lift the earth. It is the imagined magnet in the earth, without which the movement of

the needle would be unexplainable. It is that ether, which must be invented so that the vacant space can be filled. It is the molecule, without which the laws of chemistry would be miracles. Give me a little more hypotheses before anything else the fixed point outside myself, for I am entirely loose."

"Do you wish me to speak of Jesus?" asked the preacher, who believed that the sick man was irrational.

"No, not of Jesus! It is either a tale or a hypothesis. It is a device of revengeful slaves and evil women; it is the God of the mollusks opposed to the vertebrates . . . but wait, am I not myself a mollusk. Speak of Jesus! Tell of how he accompanied custom house men and dissolute women, as I have been obliged to do. Speak of how the spiritually poor shall own heaven, because they had no power on earth; and how he taught artisans to waste the time and, beggars, sluggards, prodigal sons, who owned nothing, to share with the industrious, who owned something."

"No. You blasphemer, I am not sitting here as a fool for you!" interrupted the preacher and arose in earnest.

"Do not go, do not go!" cried the sick man. "Hold my hand and let me hear your voice. Speak what you please! Read! Read in the

almanac or the Bible, it is immaterial to me. *Horror vacui,* fear of the empty nothing must away!"

"See thou, that thou hast a fear of death?"

"Surely I have that just as every living thing, which without the fear of death never would have lived, but the doom, you see, I do not fear, for the work judges the master, and I have not created myself."

The colporteur had gone!

. . . . . .

It was the day before Christmas eve, when he after a stormy night, during which he believed he had heard cannon shots and cries of human beings, went out to walk on the newly fallen snow. The heavens were blue black as an iron sheet, and the waves were heaving against the strand while the whistling buoy cried in a single uninterrupted howl, as if it called for help.

And now he saw out on the sea to the southeast a big, black steamer, with cinnabar red bottom shining as a torn and bloody breast. The funnel with its white ring lay broken on one side, and in the masts and yards dark figures were hanging, twisted as angleworms on hooks.

From a crack midships could be seen how the waves tore out chests, parcels, bales, boxes and sunk the heaviest, but carried the lighter ones to shore.

With an indifference for the fate of the shipwrecked, such as that one must feel, who regards it lucky to die, he went forwards on the strand and came out on the point, where the pile of stones and the cross stood. There the waves foamed more furiously than elsewhere, and on the green water he saw scattered objects of strange shape and color, over which the mews circled with spiteful cries, as though they had been deceived in their greedy waiting for prey.

After he had regarded the curious objects, which came nearer, he saw that they resembled very small children, very finely dressed. Some had blond bangs, others black, their cheeks were rose and white, and their big, open blue eyes, glanced up to the black sky, immovable and without winking. But when they came nearer the strand, he observed, that when they swung on the wave, the eyes of some of them moved, as if they signaled to him, that he should rescue them. And on the next wave five were thrown upon the strand.

He had his desire so fixed to own a child and so rooted in his soft brain, that he was not led to the thought, that they were dolls, which the delayed and stranded vessel had brought for the Christmas season, and he collected his arms full of the small orphan children, whom the sea, the great mother, gave him. And with his wet pro-

tégées pressed to his breast he hurried back to the cottage to dry them. But he had nothing to make a fire with, for the people had said they had no wood to sell. He himself did not feel the cold, but his little Christmas company should have it warm, and therefore he broke a book shelf to pieces, and made a flaming fire in the big fireplace, pulled out the sofa and placed the five little ones in a row before the fire. After he comprehended that they could not dry without being undressed, he began to take off their clothes, but when he saw that they were all girls, he left their small chemises on.

Now he washed their feet and hands with his sponge, and afterwards combed their hair, dressed them and laid them to sleep.

It was as though he had company in the cottage, and he walked on tiptoe not to wake them.

He had found something to live for, something to cherish, to give his sympathy to, and when he regarded the small sleepers a moment and saw that they lay with open eyes, he thought that the light pained them, therefore he let the window shades down.

When it became dusk in the room, there came over him a heavy desire to sleep, which was caused from hunger, although he could not now place the cause of the sensation in the right place and thus did not know, when he was hungry or thirsty.

However, as the sofa was occupied by the little ones, he laid down on the floor and slept.

When he awoke, it was dark in the room, but the door was open, and a woman stood with a lighted lantern on the threshold.

"Heavenly father, he is lying on the floor," Oman's maid was heard to break out. "But, dear sir, don't you know it is Christmas eve to-day?"

He had slept a day and a night and into the next day.

Unconsciously he arose, missing something, for the custom house men had been down and confiscated the strand goods, but he could not remember what he missed. He felt only a dreadful emptiness as though under a great sorrow.

"Now he shall come up to Oman's and eat the Christmas rice pap, for one is still a Christian being on Christmas eve. Oh, heavenly father, such misery!"

And the girl began to cry.

"To see a human being so wrecked, is enough to make one shed tears of blood! Come now! Come now!"

The half insane man made only a sign that he would come, if she would go first.

When she had gone, he tarried a moment in the cottage, took the lantern she had left and went to the looking glass. When he saw his face,

which resembled a savage's, his understanding seemed to light up, and his will expand for a last effort.

Leaving the lantern, he went out.

The wind had turned west and slackened somewhat, the air was clear, and the stars of heaven sparkled. Guided by the lights from the cottages he went down to the harbor, sneaked into a boat house and took out sails to a boat.

After he had hoisted the sail, he threw the painter loose, took the tiller and kept for aft-wind straight out to sea.

He made a tack to look once more on the little fragment of the earth, where he had last suffered, and when he saw a three branched candle in the custom house window, where the murderer celebrated the birthday of Jesus, the forgiver, the idol of all criminals and wretches, who licensed everything wicked that the civil law punished, he turned back and spat, pulled the sheet and made full sail. With his back towards land he steered out under the great starry map and took bearings from a star of the second magnitude between the Lyre and Corona in the east. It seemed to him that it shone brighter than any other, and when he searched in memory, there came a glimpse of something about the Christmas star, the guiding star to Bethlehem, where three dethroned kings pilgrimaged as fallen

great ones to worship their own insignificance in the smallest child of human being and which afterwards became the declared god of all little ones. No, it could not be that star, for as a punishment to the Christian wizards for having spread darkness over the earth, not a single dot of light on the arch of heaven bears the name of any one of them, and therefore they celebrated the darkest time of the year — so sublimely ridiculous! — to light wax tapers! Now as his memory cleared up — it was the star *Beta* in Hercules. Hercules, Hella's moral ideal, the god of vigor and prudence, who killed the lernean hydra with its hundred heads, who cleaned Augias' stable, captured Diomedes' bullocks which devoured human beings, who tore the girdle from the Amazon queen, fetched Cererbus up from Hades, to finally fall for a woman's stupidity, who poisoned him from pure love, after he in lunacy had served the nymph Omphale for three years . . .

Out towards the one that at least had been placed in heaven, who never let anyone strike him or spit in his face without man-like to strike and spit back, out towards the self-destroyer, who could only fall by his own strong hand without begging for mercy from the chalice, out towards Hercules, who freed Prometheus, the light giver, who was himself the son of a god and a woman, and who

was afterwards falsified by savages to be the son of a virgin, whose birth was greeted by milk drinking shepherds and braying asses.

Out to the new Christmas star led the way, out over the sea, the mother of all, from the womb of whom life's first spark was kindled, the inexhaustible spring of fecundity and love, life's origin and life's foe.

THE END

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